THIRTY

HOWARD VINCENT
O'BRIEN

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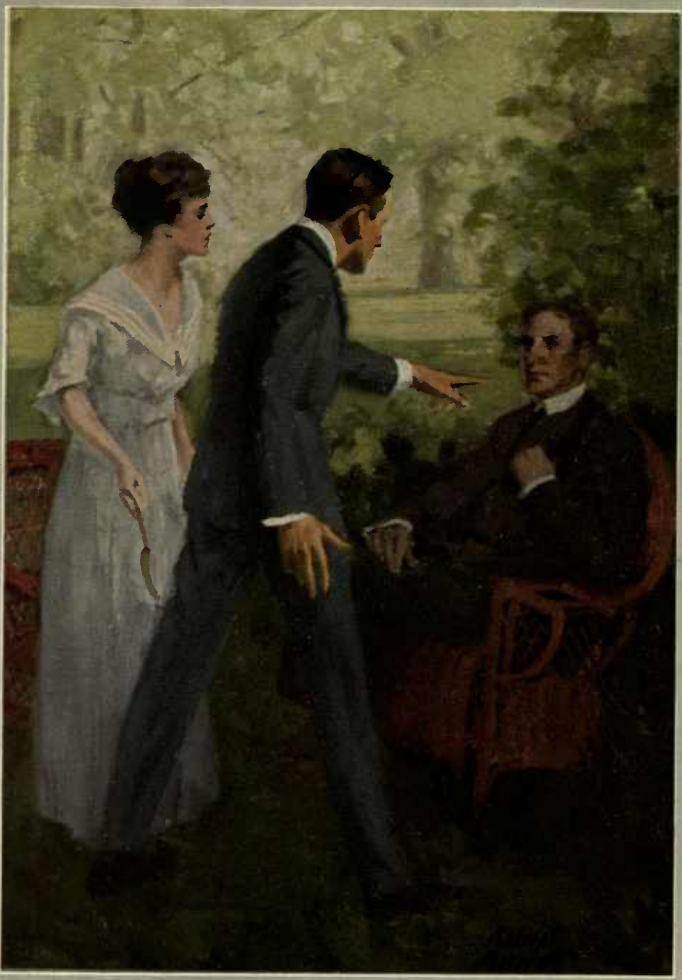

"What right have you to put such impudent questions to us, anyway" he demanded hotly

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THIRTY

BY

HOWARD VINCENT O'BRIEN

Author of "New Men for Old."

Illustrated by

ROBERT W. AMICK

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TO

MY MOTHER

WHO SOUGHT ALWAYS TO MAKE ME LOVE THE
TRUTH, THOUGH KNOWING THAT MY TRUTH
WOULD NOT, IN THE NATURE OF
THINGS, BE HERS.

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THIRTY

CHAPTER I

AN UNINVITED GUEST

ROGER WYNROD was the first down to breakfast, and he was feeling far from well. But a glass of bitters, followed by half a grape-fruit and a large cup of coffee, made him more nearly his usual cheerful self. He had a word and a smile for each one of the house-party, as they straggled in, albeit the memory of last night's disastrous game haunted him uncomfortably. The fact was that once again he faced the necessity of appealing to his sister for further funds, and he had his doubts as to how she would take it.

The meal lacked something of the cheer usually characteristic of Judith Wynrod's gatherings. Perhaps it was due to the lateness of the hour and the feverishly high stakes of the night before, or perhaps it was only the sultriness of the morning. At any rate, a certain constraint was in evidence, and no one showed any desire to linger longer than was necessary. As one by one her guests withdrew, with more or less perfunctory excuses, Judith remained sprightliness itself, laughingly protesting at the desertion of Faxon, suddenly called to town on private business, and threatening dire things to vivacious

little Mrs. Baker if her dentist detained her too long to catch the late afternoon train. But when they were all gone, little lines of weariness crept into her face, and she arose irresolutely and stood for a while watching her brother who, deeply sunk in the columns of baseball news, was unconscious of her scrutiny.

She studied him thoughtfully, the corners of her mouth drooping. It was that feature which modified her otherwise complete resemblance to her brother. She had the same undulant black hair, the same oval face and olive complexion, the same snapping eyes. But where his mouth was merely handsome, or, perhaps, better, affectionate, hers was firm and determined. One might say, in comparing the two, that if Roger wanted anything he would ask for it, whereas Judith would demand it.

She herself was not conscious of anything approaching such masterfulness or determination in her character. She had never experienced the sensation of breaking down opposition. But that was merely because there had never been any opposition offered her. Orphaned when scarce out of childhood, with an incredible fortune and no near relatives, she, like her brother, had had only to ask; it had never been necessary to demand. But of the latent strength of her will there were not lacking evidences.

Be that as it may, her time for action had not yet

come. How deeply worried she had grown about Roger, no one guessed, least of all the boy himself. There was no escaping the knowledge that she was in a sense responsible for him; the terms of their father's will had made her trustee of her brother's half until he should reach the age of thirty. Of course, she ought to do something, she had often told herself, something radical and decisive; but she was too indolent, too definitely in a groove, too bored with herself and her surroundings, to take that keen interest essential to decisive action. So, with another sigh, she passed through the long window opening on the piazza, and thence to the lawn beyond.

Roger awoke just a minute too late to the fact that they had been alone together and that he had missed the opportunity he had been waiting for. He always preferred to approach Judith on money matters casually, and not as though the occasion were of his own seeking. It certainly was absurd for a man of his years and income to be kept in leading-strings by his own sister. However, there was no help for it, and Judith had always been a good sort, he would say that for her. He needed a cheque, and he might as well get it over with at once.

He found her in the garden, examining some flowers which had just been set out. Flowers were her one hobby, and he knew that a resort to them usually indicated a certain degree of boredom with

those around her. But he went straight to the point.

"Say, sis, I'm running into town presently. Can you come in and draw me a cheque? Better make it five hundred this time, to keep me going a while."

"You lost again last night, Roger?"

"Lost?" He laughed mirthlessly. "Lord! Yes, I lost all right. The family resources can stand it, can't they?"

"How much?"

"Oh, don't ask me to figure now. My head's like a ship in a storm this morning. I don't know — lots."

"How much, Roger?"

"Oh, come on, sis, I'm in a hurry. Draw the cheque like a good girl . . . let's talk about it tomorrow." Suddenly he caught the expression on his sister's face. It was an expression he seldom saw; one that he did not like. "Well, if you have got to have the horrible truth," he snapped petulantly, "I'm cleaned out, . . . absolute bust . . . I still owe a few hundred to Faxon," he added reluctantly.

She sighed. "Again."

"Nothing's broken right for me. Absolutely nothing. You saw yourself the way the cards treated me last night."

Her eyes flashed. "You've got to be fairly sober to play a decent game of cards, Roger."

He looked aggrieved. "I was sober — almost.

Sober enough, anyway. It was luck, I tell you — just the beastly rotten luck I always have. I never did have any luck, from the day I was born. Why, any other chap, with my chances . . ."

"Roger," interrupted his sister shortly, as if she had not heard him at all. "Why do you find it necessary to throw away every cent you get? What's your idea?"

"My idea?"

"Yes. What's in your head about the future? What are you going to do with yourself? What do you think about — about — oh, things in general?"

He looked his bewilderment. "I'm afraid I don't quite connect, sis . . ."

"I want to know if you've — well — I'd like to know . . . just how you stand with yourself."

Her brother eyed her curiously. "What's struck you anyway?" he demanded. "What's happened to make you take on like this all of a sudden?"

"Nothing. It's not sudden. I've wanted to have this talk with you for a long time — not that it does any good, . . . we'll probably drag along the same old way." She sat thoughtfully silent for a moment. "I'll draw you a cheque, of course," she added listlessly. "You must pay up your debts at once. But you do worry me . . ."

"Miss Wynrod?"

"What is it, Huldah?"

Roger stopped his discourse and the maid advanced with a card. Judith took it and knitted her brows as she read.

"Who is it, sis?"

"'Brent Good,'" she read, "'*The Workman's World.*'"

"Well, he has got nerve," cried Roger. "That's that Socialist sheet, isn't it? Why, they take a crack at us once a week regular. And now they've got the gall to send a man out here. Tell him to go to the devil."

Judith turned to the maid. "Tell him that I am not at home, please, Huldah."

"I thought that would be the message," said a cheerful voice beyond the hedge, "so I didn't wait for it." A moment later a tall figure of a man emerged and took off his hat with an awkward bow.

"Good morning, Miss Wynrod." His bronzed, angular face, with its deep-set eyes and wide mouth, softened in a smile which was undeniably pleasing.

Judith surveyed his shabby figure, compounded of all manner of curious depressions and protuberances, and half smiled herself. His cheerfulness was infectious. Also, his appearance was almost comic, which was paradoxical in a representative of so savage an organ as *The Workman's World.* Then

she recalled the circumstances of his intrusion, and when she spoke her voice was chill.

"I believe you heard my message."

"Clearly. But if you had known that I had come all the way out from the city on a very hot morning, merely to do you a favour, I don't think you would have given it." He surveyed her reproachfully. Then his lips parted again in a smile. "Won't you give me five minutes, Miss Wynrod — please."

Judith was no exception to the rule that curiosity is a dominant motive in human conduct. Besides, she had already succumbed to the curious stranger's magnetic geniality.

She hesitated. "Well . . ." He took it to be acquiescence.

"Thanks very much. Now could I have this five minutes with you — alone?"

Roger frowned at the request, and winked at his sister.

"This is my brother. Anything that concerns me will concern him."

The stranger's demeanour was unruffled.

"I see. And I am very glad. What I have to say does concern your brother quite as much as it concerns yourself."

"Fire away!" interrupted Roger. Curiosity is by no means a distinctively feminine weakness.

The occupant of the shabby brown suit removed

his almost equally brown straw hat and laid it on the grass.

"It's hot, isn't it," he smiled. It was difficult to resist that smile. Judith invited him to be seated. And although she herself remained standing, he accepted the invitation with alacrity. She marked that against him, although his next remark appeased her somewhat.

"It's a long walk up from the station," he said, carefully removing the abundant perspiration from his craggy forehead. "Pretty road, though," he added.

Judith was content to let him take his own time. But Roger was more impatient.

"You have something to say to us?"

"Yes," he admitted, "I have."

"Well . . . ?"

Mr. Good looked from brother to sister. An expression of half-humorous dismay crossed his face, an expression which both of them caught, but neither understood. Then he drew a long breath and carefully folded his handkerchief. One long, lean forefinger shot out suddenly toward Judith, and the quizzical little smile vanished from his lips.

"You know, Miss Wynrod, of the terrible situation down in the Algoma mines. You know of the bloodshed, the pitched battles between strikers and mine-guards. And worst of all,"— With a rapid

gesture, contrasting strongly with the languorous slowness of his movements before, he drew a folded newspaper from one of his bulging pockets —" You must have read this morning of the burning to death of twenty-two women and children — the families of the striking miners."

Judith had read the story. That is, she had glanced at the headlines, and realising the horror of their import, and at the same time feeling that there was no particular interest for her, had passed on to closer and less unpleasant interests. She remained silent before the tall stranger's accusing finger. Her curiosity was more piqued than ever. But Roger was angered.

" Well — and what of it? " he demanded with ill-concealed truculence.

The tall man turned his serious gaze on Roger.

" I suppose you are familiar with this terrible situation, too," he said, half interrogatively.

" Suppose I am. What of it. I say? " Roger knew nothing whatever about it, of course, and from the other man's sudden, half-veiled smile, it was perfectly obvious that he knew that he did not. He turned suddenly from Roger with a faint gesture of his long hand that seemed to sweep that young man totally out of the discussion.

Then Judith, offended, although Roger himself was hardly conscious of the rebuff, spoke for him.

"Yes," she said with deliberate coldness. "We know all about it. But what of it?"

"Simply this, Miss Wynrod," said Good crisply, and with a hint of hostility in his manner. "You are a large stockholder in several of the Algoma mines. The blood of those murdered miners is on your head — and those innocent women and children burned to death by your hirelings. Whether you know it or not, you have a responsibility for the situation, and I have come here to-day to find out what you are going to do about it all?"

"Do about it?" cried Judith, amazed by the suddenness of his attack. "I'm afraid I don't understand."

The stranger's mood softened and his voice became quieter.

"I want to find out what you think about things — things in general — what you are going to do with the great wealth which is yours, what part you are going to play in the changing world. This business at Algoma — that's only a part of the whole. I want to find out what — well — what you really *are?*"

Judith could have laughed aloud at the irony of the question which this uncouth stranger was putting to her. It was, almost to the words, the same question she had put to her brother not half an hour before. What did she think about things? Why

were people suddenly so interested in what other people thought?

But the similarity was not apparent to Roger. The question caused him no introspection: only anger.

"What right have you to put such impudent questions to us, anyway," he demanded hotly. "Who the devil are you to intrude on us in this fashion? You'd best get out before I have you put out."

The tall man made no move to rise from his chair as Roger stood threateningly above him. He merely turned his hands up in a quaint gesture of deprecation.

"Bless your heart, young chap, *I'm* not putting any questions. If you'll glance at my card, you'll notice that my business comes before my name. I'm simply the spokesman of a newspaper . . ."

"Newspaper!" sneered Roger. "Do you call that anarchist rag a newspaper?"

But the other man refused to be interrupted. He proceeded equably. "And that newspaper, in turn, is simply the spokesman of the public. It's the public that wants to know *who* you are — and *what* you are — not I. Personally, to be quite candid, I don't care a farthing. But . . ."

"Well, and what right has the public to come prying into our private affairs?" interrupted Roger again. "It's none of their business. This is sup-

posed to be a free country. Why don't you give law-abiding private citizens a little freedom and privacy? You force your way in where you aren't wanted and insult us and then say it's because the public wants to know. What business is it of the public's what we do and what we think?"

The stranger smiled benignly.

"My dear young man," he said calmly, as he folded up his newspaper and fitted it into his pocket. "That's old, old stuff. You're 'way behind the times. That rode into the discard on the tumbrels of the Revolution. As an individual, nobody cares a rap about you. As the possessor of a great fortune, the public is very keenly interested in your lightest thought. But I'm not going to attempt to give you a lesson in elementary history. Your sister can, I am sure, do that for me."

He turned to her with the same galling indifference that had so offended Roger before. She could not but admire the assurance of his manner in the face of such open hostility.

"Miss Wynrod," he went on calmly, "I do hope you will talk to me frankly. Won't you tell me what you honestly think of your relations, first to this business at Algoma, and then . . ."

"Don't say a word," interrupted Roger. "Remember the sheet he represents."

Judith did remember, and the recollection made

her angry. She smarted still at the cartoons and denunciatory editorials in which she had so frequently been singled out for attack.

"Don't you think it's just a little curious, Mr. Good," she asked quietly, "that you should come to me in this way when you must know how your own paper has treated me?"

A pained expression crossed his eyes.

"It is a little queer," he admitted. "And honestly I don't like the roasts they give you any better than you do. But don't you see that in a way you're responsible for them? You never come back. You just hide. People don't know what you think. All they see is the results — what you do — or what they think you do . . . and that amounts to the same thing, doesn't it? Now if you'd just discuss the Algoma situation, and give me some idea of what you think its causes are, and what part you think you ought to play in making things better, it'll go a long way toward making the public understand you better and sympathise with you. They think that life's a rose garden to you, you know. They never dream that you have troubles, too. You never tell them. All you show is the contented side of your life, the luxury, the pleasure, the idleness. Why not take them into your confidence?"

Of the shabby stranger's earnestness there could be no doubt. His long arms waved and the per-

spiration welled out on his cheeks as he strove to present his arguments. At intervals Roger sneered audibly, though Judith listened attentively. But when he paused for breath, she shook her head.

"I sympathise with your point of view," she said with an effort at finality. "But I have nothing to say."

But he refused to be put off. "But Miss Wynrod, can't you see what an opportunity I'm giving? Here's a chance for you to set yourself right with the people. They think you live for nothing but money. They think you could fix everything up into an imitation of Heaven if you only weren't greedy. Why don't you show them that you are doing all you can, that you're thinking about things, that you're not the heartless, selfish, narrow, stupid creature they think you are. This is an opportunity to make yourself loved instead of hated. Why, Miss Wynrod, if you'll make a statement, I'll bring the proofs to you to correct. I won't put a comma in that you don't want. Wouldn't that be better than to go back and write a story and say that when I asked you what you thought about the burning to death of twenty-two women and children in one of your own mines, by your own hirelings, you replied that you had nothing to say?"

Roger was speechless with wrath at this torrent of what he thought was abuse, failing to distinguish

between the general and the specific. It was only by an effort of will that he restrained himself from laying violent hands on this threadbare creature with the eloquent tongue, who, it appeared to him, was deliberately insulting his sister. But Judith herself felt no rancour. Indeed she felt the magnetism of the reporter more strongly with each word, and it never occurred to impugn the sincerity of his outburst — nor its justice. Her face struggled painfully in an effort to be cold and impassive as she barely whispered again her refusal to speak.

Good studied her for a moment. Then he smiled, quite cheerfully. All his hot tensity vanished suddenly.

"I think I understand," he said quietly. "It isn't that you won't talk to me — but you can't. You can't tell me what you think about these things — because you haven't thought about them. But you're going to, Miss Wynrod, you're going to. Some day I shall come back, and then you will talk to me. Perhaps you will even ask me to come back."

Roger laughed at that, but Judith was silent. She had a curious and not at all pleasant sense that this curious, contradictory, talkative stranger, with his grotesque form and clothes, and bad manners, not to say impudence, knew her better than she knew herself. He was perfectly right. She tried to tell

herself that her refusal to talk to him was dictated by a finely conscious dignity. But she knew very well that such was not the case. He had indeed spoken truly when he said that she could not talk because she had not thought. She had not. And she was not at all incredulous at his prophecy that she might one day call him back. She would think more about these matters — she had begun, perforce but none the less certainly, to think about them already.

The reporter, still studying her quizzically, and so intently as to make her consciously uncomfortable, rose slowly.

"I'm sorry, Miss Wynrod. I've had a wasted trip — and yet I haven't. You're beginning to think. Some day you will talk. Perhaps I shall be present. I am glad we have become friends — you, too, Mr. Wynrod. Good morning."

In spite of his awkwardness, his movements were rapid. It seemed almost like a fairy disappearance, so quickly was he out of sight behind the hedge. Only his dilapidated straw hat could be seen bobbing rythmically out of view.

"Well, of all cranks," laughed Roger. "And the nerve of him. Did you hear his calm assumption that we have now become fast friends? Can you beat it?"

But Judith said: "It's a long road to the station.

I should have sent the car." And then, suddenly feeling an unaccountable distaste for her brother's society, she went thoughtfully into the house.

In the hall she encountered Faxon, in search of her. He had to make the 10.46, and had none too much time to get to the station.

"Joris will take you down," she said mechanically, when he had explained.

"He's taken Alder and some of the others up to the golf club."

"And Picard?"

"He's off somewhere, too."

"How stupid. Well, I'll take you down myself. Let's see. Oh, we can make it easily. It's only a quarter past now. I'll have the electric around in a moment."

While she waited for the car to be brought around, she found herself responding perfunctorily to Mr. Faxon's running comment on all sorts of things in general, conscious that for the first time he was rather tiresome. She had never taken his attentions to herself seriously. She knew that he had a certain interest in pretty Della Baker rather warmer than was permissible in the case of a married woman, and she shut her eyes to the fact that her house gave them opportunities to meet that they would not otherwise have had. Yet she believed there was no real harm in Della, and as for Faxon,

— well, he had flirted with so many women in his time that she could not take him altogether seriously either with herself or with others. And he usually succeeded in being amusing. But to-day she had no desire to be amused. She was thinking earnestly for perhaps the first time in her life . . . wondering what she really did think about things in general.

As she seated herself in the car and Faxon climbed in beside her, she grew more silent, and her thoughts strayed very far away from Braeburn. In spite of a very considerable reluctance on her part, they persisted in wandering to an ugly little collection of shanties, piled helter-skelter in the midst of lowering hills, where men went down into the earth and came up — something less than men — where twenty-two . . . over and over again that wretched phrase persisted in repeating itself, until she wanted to scream. Why had she ever allowed that disagreeable stranger to spoil her day?

Suddenly, as if to punctuate her thoughts, she caught sight of a familiar figure marching jerkily along the dusty road in front of her. He was even more grotesque from behind, but there was something pathetic in the weary droop of his shoulders. She felt acutely conscious of the comfort of her vehicle.

Two or three times as she neared the angular pedestrian, she rang her bell. But he either did

not hear it or he did not notice it; for he kept on in his uneven stride, with his head bent well forward, and his bedraggled straw almost over his ears.

She was almost upon him, and the narrowness of the road showed little clearance between him and the machine, when she rang again. The sound seemed to startle and confuse him. His head rose with a jerk and he stopped short. Then he stepped, with the utmost deliberateness, directly in the path of the approaching car.

With all the power in her lithe body, Judith jammed on both brakes. But it was too late. There was a crash of glass as Faxon's cane went through the window. On her knees where she had been thrown by the suddenness of the stop she heard his "damned ass!" gritted through his teeth. She remembered afterward that she had wondered whether the epithet was for herself or for the stranger in the road. But at the time she heard only the horrible crunch of steel against flesh, the muffled snap as of a broken twig, and a low groan, twice repeated.

Faxon was out of the car in an instant, and standing in the road, his face white as chalk, frantically motioning to her to reverse. In a daze she put on the power, and when she had moved back a few feet, followed him outside.

But her daze was only momentary. For just an

instant she stood stupidly watching Faxon struggle with a dreadfully inanimate brown mass. Then she became herself.

"Here," she cried. "In the car — quick." And when Faxon seemed indecisive, she laid hold of the unconscious figure herself and helped to lift it into the machine.

As she climbed in after it, Faxon made as if to follow her. But she waved him off.

"You can make that train if you hurry," she said sharply. "It's only a little way to the station." And with that she tossed his cane to him, and all but kicked his bag after it.

Faxon expostulated, but she was too occupied in turning her car around to heed him. The sudden sharp hum of the motor as she jumped from speed to speed made him realise the futility of his protests, and so, philosophically, but not a little shaken by the suddenness of it all, he picked up his bag and stick and made for the station.

Judith, as she sped homeward, did not trust herself to glance at the crumpled figure on the floor beside her. And over and over again, as she urged the car to its utmost, she kept repeating an almost wordless prayer —

"I mustn't faint . . . I mustn't faint . . . I mustn't . . ."

She was almost home when the brown bundle

stirred faintly, and she caught a weak groan. Still she dared not look. It was only when she was forced to, that she turned her eyes in answer to a weakly whispered question.

"What's up?"

"Oh, I'm so glad!" she breathed, more to herself than to him, "so glad . . . I thought . . ." Then, a little louder —"Where are you hurt?"

"My leg, I think," said the injured man, in a voice that was a pitiful travesty of the one that had talked to her so earnestly in her garden, only a few minutes before. "It — it hurts like the dickens."

She rang her bell frantically all the way up the drive to the house, and there were half a dozen excited people to meet her. She was far calmer than they and she superintended the removal of Good from the car with perfect impassiveness. But he had lost consciousness again, and the sight of his bloodless face, deathly pallid save for the crimson splash on one cheek, almost unnerved her.

"Take him to the grey room, Portis," she said quietly. "And tell somebody to get Dr. Ruetter. He's staying at Mrs. Craven's. Please hurry." It was very hard to keep her voice calm, but she managed to accomplish it.

Finally, when she could think of nothing else to do, and to the very great amazement of everyone, she suddenly collapsed in a dead faint.

When she came to herself again, Dr. Ruetter was standing over her.

"Well, young lady," he said cheerfully. "You've made quite a morning of it."

Her first thought was of Good.

"Tell me," she cried anxiously. "How is he? Is he very badly hurt? Will he die?"

"Unquestionably," smiled the Doctor. But when she sank back with a groan, he added, "just like we all will."

"Oh. Then he isn't fatally hurt?"

"Bless you, no! Broken leg, that's all. Bad break, I'll admit — compound fracture — but nothing to cause alarm."

"But he's got to go to a hospital," spoke up Roger, whom she had not noticed before.

"The hospital? Who said so?"

"The Doctor. He says . . ."

"Oh, by all means," said the Doctor, quite as if the prospect gave him personal pleasure. "This isn't a bruised finger, you know. That chap won't be up and around for three weeks or a month at least. The hospital's the place for him."

"What hospital?" asked Judith thoughtfully.

"Judging by his clothes, I should say the County."

Judith sat bolt upright at that.

"He will not go to the County Hospital," she said with finality. "He won't go to any hospital."

"Don't get excited, sis," said Roger with soothing intent. But his words had the opposite effect.

"He's going to stay right where he is," she continued. "It's the least I can do, after nearly killing him."

"That's very kind and good, of course," said the Doctor in obedience to a glance from Roger. "But I'm afraid you don't quite understand. He'll be laid up for a long time — six weeks, perhaps. And really, he'd be better off in a hospital."

"Don't talk nonsense," said Judith sharply. "Is he going to need treatment?"

"Well, no," admitted the Doctor in some confusion.

"It's purely a matter of convalescence. He'll be far more comfortable here. He'll stay here. Now please go away and let me alone. I'm all fagged out."

The Doctor pleaded and cajoled, even, in obedience to further glances from Roger, ventured to order. But Judith merely closed her eyes and refused to listen to him at all. Finally, being something of a philosopher, he wished her a very pleasant good morning, and went on his way.

Roger continued to storm, though quite ineffectually.

"Why, confound it, sis," he cried in exasperation, "what's the sense in playing lady bountiful to a

fellow who'll make use of his first day of health to enter a whopping big suit for damages against you?"

"Does he strike you as that sort of a chap?" she asked mildly.

"You know how he feels toward people like us. He told you, himself. He'd think it a sin to let a chance go by to soak us. He'd probably feel justified by the way we treated him this morning."

"We weren't very cordial, were we?"

"Cordial! I told him to get out before I threw him out. Why, he's as full of grievances as a cat is fleas. Mark my words, the only gratitude you'll get will be a good fat damage suit. And you know how much of a chance you'd have against him."

"Well, he'd deserve something, wouldn't he?" asked Judith. "He'll probably lose his position if he's going to be laid up for six weeks."

Roger looked at her in amazement.

"Say, are you going daffy?" Then he reflected for a moment. "That's not a bad idea, sis. I might give him a couple of hundred in exchange for a quit claim. That's what the railroads do in their accidents. A hundred or two will look bigger to him right now than a thousand next year. I'll get him before any shyster lawyer does. I'll fix it up, all right. Don't you worry, sis. That crazy anarchist won't trouble you . . ."

But Judith was not worrying. Her eyes had

closed again in a perfectly obvious simulation of sleep. For a moment Roger looked a little hurt by this indifferent reception of his idea. Then he tiptoed quietly out of the room.

Full of his plan, he hastened to the grey room, where the tall stranger lay, all his cheerful smile lost in the twisted grin of pain.

But he managed somehow to smile, after a fashion at least, when Roger came in.

"Hello," he said, with something of his characteristic buoyancy.

"Hello," said Roger, trying to be casual. "How you feeling?"

"Ever see a hog skinned?" grinned the tall man. "That's how."

Roger's sympathies were stirred. He was really a very tender-hearted lad. But he was not to be swerved from his purpose. He had a duty to perform.

"Bad business," he said seriously, seating himself beside the bed. Then he nodded to the maid, who had been detailed to act as nurse, to leave the room. When she had closed the door, he turned confidentially to Good.

"I say, old man," he said with something of embarrassment in his manner, "you're going to be laid up for a good stretch, you know, and you may lose your job and all that —"

"Tweedledee," said the tall man. "You can't lose what you haven't got."

Roger was at a loss just how to answer that sally, so he decided to overlook it.

"You're bound to be considerably put out," he went on.

"Considerably is right," chuckled Good.

Roger found it very difficult, much more so than he had expected, to talk to this curious creature. But he was persistent.

"Well, we don't intend that you shall lose anything," he said in as friendly a way as he could. But it was a little too friendly. It was the tone with which one offers a tip. "I'll give you a cheque for two hundred dollars — all the doctor's bills paid — and —" He drew a cheque book from his pocket and unscrewed his fountain pen. "How shall I make it out?"

Good raised his hand. "Cut that," he said shortly.

Roger misconstrued the gesture. It irritated him.

"Don't you think it's — enough?" he asked bluntly.

But the tall man only smiled.

"Oh, forget it," he said. "Why should you give me any money. You can pay the bills if you want to. Guess you'll have to if the medico's going

to get anything. That'll call it square, I guess."

"How about the six weeks' lay-up?"

"I'll get a good rest and plenty to eat — at the county's expense. Why should I worry?" smiled Good.

"Then you refuse to accept a cheque?" demanded Roger.

"Of course."

Roger was so full of his own suspicions that it never occurred to him to question their justice. And the blithe and offhand way in which this ragamuffin declined his cheque only seemed to confirm his belief that he was playing for higher stakes. He lost his patience entirely.

"You'd rather wait till you can get some quack lawyer," he sneered, "and then try to bleed us for a big wad, eh?"

The man on the bed opened his eyes in amazement.

"Good Lord," he cried, "what kind of people have you been brought up with?"

"Well, just let me tell you, my friend," went on Roger hotly, "that you won't get a cent by that game. My sister has a witness to prove that the accident was all your own fault . . ."

"Well," interrupted the stranger, a little wearily, "that's right. What are you fussing about?"

It was Roger's turn to open his eyes in amazement.

"You mean — you admit — it was your fault?" he stammered.

"Of course. I was thinking about — something else — usually am — when your sister rang her bell. I didn't hear it, at first. When I did, I — well — I don't know — guess I just stepped the wrong way. It's my own fault for getting chewed up. Don't worry, my boy, there won't be any damage suit. I haven't any claim — besides I'm a good sight more afraid of lawyers than you are."

Roger stared in silent astonishment. "You are a queer one," he ejaculated finally.

The injured man smiled, a little sadly.

"You're awfully young to be so suspicious of your fellow man," he said almost to himself. Then, more briskly and cheerfully, he addressed himself to the very surprised and humiliated Roger.

"Now that we've got that settled, let's tackle the next question. When are you going to ship me into town?"

"We're not going to ship you in," answered Roger, very chastened.

Good lifted his eyebrows. "Not going to? What's the answer?"

"My sister intends to have you stay where you

are." Then he added in a more friendly tone, "It's the least we can do for you, you know."

"Well, well!" Good's face was illumined with smiles. "I say, that's fine," he cried. "Most extraordinary, too," he added, under his breath. Then he surveyed the neatness and harmonious quiet of the room. His eyes, with a little gleam in in them, roamed comfortably into every corner. "It's worth being laid up to get a taste of this," he cried naïvely. "You see, I've never seen anything just like this," he added, almost apologetically, with the little deprecatory lift of his hands that had already fastened itself upon Roger as characteristic. "It's too good to be true!"

For a moment Roger was silent at this display of ingenuousness. Then he spoke as he would have expected to be spoken to, had their positions been reversed.

"I'll send in for your clothes — and things — if you'll give me your address. . . ."

The tall man's expression of content faded. It was succeeded by a look of what might be taken for pain, or embarrassment,— or both.

"They're all here," he said quietly. "It wouldn't be worth while to send after a toothbrush and a comb, would it. That's all there is — home."

"Oh — I beg your pardon," said Roger, red-

dening. Then he cursed himself for the tactlessness of the apology.

"Nothing to blush at, my boy," cried Good. "Lend me a suit of pajamas, instead."

Roger rose hastily. He welcomed the opportunity to escape from this curious creature, who said such curious things, and who possessed but one suit of clothes. As very rarely happened, he found himself at a loss for words.

"Can I do anything else?" he asked from the doorway.

"Yes — you can thank your sister — from the bottom of my heart — for having introduced me to her motor-car . . . and *this* —" he waved his hand around comprehensively, and smiled.

"Anything else?"

"Well, you might call up *The World* and tell them that I won't be down to-morrow. You might add that I fell down on the Wynrod story . . . that I'm in the camps of the Persians."

Then, when Roger looked puzzled, he yawned luxuriously and stretched his arms over his head. And after another yawn, he closed his eyes.

"That's all, thanks. Tell 'em not to wake me — for a week. . . ."

CHAPTER II

A BLOW — AND A RESOLUTION

I

It was after ten o'clock on the evening of the same day. Judith was thankful when a change at one of the tables gave her an opportunity to steal away. It was the same old routine, the same interminable bridge, the same familiar group, even including Faxon and Della Baker who, by a coincidence that had called forth little veiled ironies, had returned by the same late afternoon train. Judith wondered at herself. The life she led, the people she called her friends, had never seemed quite so shallow before. She stole upstairs and listened for a moment at the door of her patient's room. All was quite soundless. Returning to the floor below, she stepped out into the grateful coolness of the evening, seeking that part of the piazza at the opposite end of the house from the parlours. Pausing outside the smoking-room, she heard voices and the tinkle of ice. She looked through the glass door; there were two men in the room, Della Baker's husband and Faxon. The latter was stirring his high-ball

thoughtfully. His words arrested her as she was on the point of turning back.

"If Roger keeps on at his present gait he'll make a neat little hole even in the Wynrod pile."

Baker lighted a fresh cigar. "Yes?" His tone was noncommittal.

"Got any for himself, d'ye think — or does Judith hold the bag?" Such imprudent garrulity was not characteristic of Faxon, but more whisky than was good for him had dulled discretion and loosened his tongue.

"It's hard to say." Baker leaned back and blew smoke rings toward the ceiling. He was an extraordinarily taciturn man, even for a lawyer.

"The old man had a lot of confidence in her." Faxon gave the impression of soliloquy. "Shouldn't wonder if she kept the kid on an allowance. He's strapped pretty tight sometimes. Queer girl, Judith."

"Think so?"

"Yes. Sometimes I don't just know how to take her."

"So?"

"Charming, fine character and all that — but difficult. Don't you think so?"

"Um — well . . ."

"Roger's different."

"Is he?"

"Oh, my, yes. I don't mean when he's carrying a package — I want to dodge then — but when he's sober, he's a nice kid. Awfully young and simple, of course. Still . . ."

"Alarums without — and enter the king!" came a thick voice from the doorway, a voice that arrested Judith a second time and held her spellbound. She was already tingling with mortification. How dared her friends calmly analyse her and Roger in their own house, speculate on their private money matters, condescendingly, almost sneeringly foot up their account of good and bad? Then, even in the dark, she felt her cheeks grow hot. Was she herself much better than they, playing the eavesdropper on her own guests? Somehow, oddly, the thought flashed upon her that the quiet man upstairs would not have done so, that his code of ethics was a cleaner one than hers and that of her friends. But when she heard her brother's voice, with that telltale thickening in it, sheer dread of what he might do banished all thought of social niceties. Roger was not often like this, but when he was it meant trouble.

"Hello, Roger." Faxon's manner underwent a subtle change. "Thought you were playin' bridge with the crowd."

"Bridge? Me? Not on your life! I've cut that out. I'm sick of givin' the whole party, I am. I'm sick of bein' a Christmas-tree for blind babies.

Put your han's in my pockets, boys. Ev'body's doin' it! No, sir, I've quit f' good. Where's the Scotch?"

"Really, Roger," protested Baker somewhat anxiously, "don't you think you'd better . . ."

"Jus' one toast," insisted Roger obstinately, "jus' one." He drew himself unsteadily erect. "I wanta drink — I wanta drink — to the mos' beautiful, mos' 'ttractive, mos' heartless . . ." As he raised the glass with a flourish, it slipped from his fingers and crashed on the table, its golden contents trickling over Baker's knees.

There was momentary silence; then a single short laugh. It sobered Wynrod like a dash of cold water. "You think I'm funny?" he demanded.

Faxon reddened. "Oh, come now, Roger, why so peevish? You've got things to be thankful about. I hear that Vera is leaving you, without even the threat of a breach of promise suit —"

The blood surged up into Roger's cheeks and his features sharpened. When he finally spoke it was very slowly.

"I'll thank you to keep your mouth shut on matters that don't concern you," he said icily.

Faxon's eyes gleamed angrily, and his lips parted; but he did not speak. He passed his hand across his mouth and laughed nervously.

Baker put his hand on the younger man's shoulder. "Let's see how the cards are going, Roger . . ."

But Wynrod shook him off. "Would you mind beating it, John — just a moment. I want to talk to Faxon — there's a good fellow —"

Baker surveyed the pair — and hesitated. Then, with a cold and meaning glance at Faxon, he shrugged his shoulders and went out.

When the curtains had closed, Wynrod turned to Faxon. He drew in his breath and his teeth clicked sharply.

"I may run the risk of breach of promise suits," he said, after a long pause, "but I stay away from married women."

"Well, that's noble of you to be sure, but — what of it?"

"You don't."

Faxon's features tightened. "I'm afraid I don't understand . . ."

"That's a lie," said Wynrod in an ugly, deliberate way.

"Now see here . . ." Faxon tried to bluster, but it was patently forced.

"Either you or the Bakers have got to get out of this house." The words were said quietly enough, but the determination behind them was plain. Faxon realised that, and tried equivocation.

"Why?"

"Because I won't have this sort of thing going on in my house."

"Your house?" There was just the faintest suggestion of an emphasis upon the pronoun.

"My house," repeated Roger coldly. "I saw you and Della last night. And I know you met in town to-day. If she wants to make that kind of an ass of herself outside, that's her business. But she can't do it here. John Baker's my friend."

For an instant Faxon's jaw was set with curled lips, and his eyes blazed. Then the whole expression changed, and he shrugged his shoulders and laughed — though not very easily.

"Why, Roger old boy, you're all wrong. You're quite mistaken about Della Baker. She and I are good friends — nothing more. She's an unhappy little woman, that's all. She — oh well, she's taken my friendship for something more. She . . ."

"Let's not discuss her."

"As you like. But you've got to get things straight. Just because I was decent to her when her husband wasn't, and she fancied me in love with her, doesn't make me the sort of chap you seem to think me, does it?"

Roger was silent. Faxon assumed that the silence meant an acceptance of his explanation, and

his apparent success made him careless. His voice softened and his manner became almost feline. He put his hand on the other's shoulder.

"You've got it all dead wrong, my boy. Della's spoiled the party for me. She's stuck to me like a barnacle. I didn't come out here for her. I wanted to see Judith. Why . . ."

Roger seemed suddenly to grow a head taller. His eyes flamed like banked fires, and his nostrils dilated. His fists clenched fiercely. "Cut that — cut it, I tell you," he ground thickly through his set teeth. "Don't you ever speak of my sister like that. By God, I won't stand it, you hear." His voice was low but clear and vibrant with suppressed passion.

Faxon recoiled, and his suavity left him. "Your sister is of age, I believe," he said with a steely evenness. "She needs no protector."

"You keep away, I tell you. You keep away." Roger's breath came shortly, and his fists clenched and unclenched themselves spasmodically.

"If I'm not good enough to look at your sister, how about you — and Molly Wolcott? I can't see that little Vera's any better than Della Baker."

"Cut it, Faxon. You're going too far!"

"Is that so?" sneered the older man harshly. "Well, what if I go farther. I won't take much nonsense from you, my cock."

"You'll get out of this house and stay out . . ." Roger's eyes were ablaze and his features worked convulsively. The other, much larger of frame, glared down at him with a gaze as hot as his own. The atmosphere was tense.

Then, almost simultaneously the curtains parted and the two sections of the piazza window swung inward. Baker who had left the two men very reluctantly, and had returned as soon as he decently could, was present at the climax. He jumped forward as he saw the two men facing each other over the narrow table, and comprehended the situation. But he was too late. He caught an ugly word from Wynrod. Then, with a savage oath, Faxon's arm shot out.

There was the dull crunch of flesh against flesh, and the younger man staggered back from the impact; then blind with rage, he sprang forward again; a crash of shattered glass followed, as the mis-aimed whisky bottle splintered against the sideboard. Then, simultaneously the three men became aware of Judith standing white and statuesque in the window, her eyes ablaze with scorn and repulsion.

Of what was said she had no clear memory afterwards. Roger, belligerent still, attempted a hot defence, but she silenced him with a cutting word. Faxon for the first time on record, found his suavity forsake him. He had been caught by his hostess

in a disorderly broil, and his dapperness was marred with spattered liquor. His rhetoric quite broke down and he was conscious of making the most awkward exit of his career.

It was fully an hour later, when the house was quiet for the night, that Judith found Roger nursing a slight but smarting cut on his cheek, where Faxon's seal ring had grazed it.

"Roger," she said, "that's enough 'first aid,' isn't it? I want to talk with you."

"Oh, cut it out, Judith. Go to bed. I've had all a fellow can stand for one evening, without being lectured by you!"

"It can't wait, Roger. I have some things that I must say to you now, to-night, and you have got to listen. I couldn't sleep if I didn't. I have waited too long already. If I hadn't, this wretched, vulgar thing wouldn't have happened. . . . And with one of your own guests, too."

He straightened at that and lost his sheepish look. "One of my guests? Not by a million! I wouldn't have that damned bounder in my kennels. Why, hang it all, Judith, I can't see what you have the chap around for at all. He . . ."

"You know perfectly well why I have him. He's here so that Della Baker can have a good time — poor girl."

"Poor girl! Rats! Just because her husband doesn't play tag with her all day, she's 'poor girl.' Instead of behaving like a halfway decent sort, she's making several different kinds of a fool of herself over Joe Faxon. 'Poor girl?'— don't make me laugh!"

"Oh, I heard what you said to Mr. Faxon. But it doesn't follow, Roger, just because you have a nasty mind that everybody is as horrid as you choose to think. Maybe there are some sides of a man's life that I'm not supposed to know about. But just escaping a breach of promise suit,— oh, Roger, shame on you!"

For a moment the young man lost some of his assurance. "You aren't fair," he protested aggrievedly. "You're bound to put me in the wrong every time. Admitted that I have made all sorts of a fool of myself,— a fellow has to learn somehow, hasn't he? But you'll believe the worst of me any time, and you won't believe anything against your precious friends. You're biased, that's what you are, biased."

Judith sighed and took a cigarette from the table and lighted it. She smoked thoughtfully for a moment.

"Roger, I'm sure I don't know what to do with you. It's just one scrape after another. It won't be long before this one will be out. But I don't mean

to be unfair. If as you say, you have been all kinds of a fool, it isn't any more your fault than it is mine. I had no right to make it possible for you to be all kinds of a fool. And as a matter of fact, you are not a bit ashamed of yourself, Roger. On the contrary, you're altogether too satisfied with yourself."

Her brother smiled uneasily. "I don't know that I'm really in need of condolence," he rejoined with an attempt at sarcasm.

"That's just the trouble," she said earnestly. "You've been feeling altogether too well — with altogether too little reason." She tossed her cigarette in the fireplace, and then turned and faced him with lips compressed. "I overheard some people discussing you the other night, Roger. One called you 'no account,' the other, 'a bad egg,' and both agreed that the cause was 'too much money.'"

His eyes flashed. "Who were they?" he demanded belligerently.

"That makes no difference."

"Why doesn't it?"

"Because what they said is true."

Roger was silent at that, but Judith went on relentlessly.

"You *are* no account, Roger. By the standards of men who do things in the world, you're good for nothing. You're a good dancer. You can drive a motor car. You know enough about horses to

play polo. And when you put your mind to it, you play a good game of cards. Beyond that, what can you do — what *are* you?"

He eyed her narrowly, and a faint flush rose in his cheeks.

"What do you want me to do — give a catalogue of virtues?" he inquired sarcastically. "What's all this leading to, anyway. Granted that I'm all kinds of a waster, what's the answer?"

Judith was thoughtfully silent for a little while after his question, and when she spoke it was to answer it with another question.

"Have you ever done a single stroke of useful work in your life?"

"Probably not." His tone was a little flippant.

"Why not?"

"Never had to." The flippancy was quite obvious.

"No, you never had to — never *had* to do anything." There was another long silence, broken only by the nervous drumming of Roger's finger-tips on the edge of his chair. When Judith spoke again, her tone was tender, but with a vibrant note of determination which communicated itself fully even to her brother's apathetic faculties.

"Well, from now on, you're going to play the man. You're going to take care of yourself. You're going to *have* to do things."

"What do you mean?" All Roger's flippancy had vanished, and in its place was an almost comic anxiety.

"Just what I said, Roger lad. I shall support you no longer."

"You mean . . . you're going to stop my allowance?" He was aghast at the possibility, and he made no effort to conceal his feelings. "Surely you can't be thinking of anything so — so — outrageous?" he demanded.

"But I am!" She tossed her head with a suggestion of defiance, and smiled. "You've done as you pleased for all your twenty-four years. Well, you can go on doing as you please — only you'll do it on your own money."

"But this money — my allowance — it isn't yours, you know," he expostulated, almost tearfully. "It's merely an idiotic will that gives you the disposal of it. What right have you got to get on your high horse and tell me what I must and mustn't do? Answer me that."

"No *right,* Roger," she said sadly. "Half of what we have is yours of course. But it's not yours till you're thirty — you know that. I couldn't give it to you now even if I wanted to. I'm not even obliged to give you an allowance. The two thousand, of course, you'll continue to get. I can't control that. But beyond . . ."

"Two thousand! What good will that do me? Do you think I can live on that?"

"Some people do," she murmured faintly. Judith was not without a certain quiet irony when she chose to employ it.

"Don't be silly, Judith. You know mighty well I can't get along on that. Why, good heavens, I can't possibly do it!" His voice rose shrilly as the enormity of the thought struck him with all its force. But Judith refused to be troubled.

"Perhaps you'll know more about it after you've tried," she said gently.

Roger jumped to his feet and paced rapidly to and fro for a moment. Then he faced his sister, and his eyes blazed like those of an angry cat.

"Do you really mean that you're going to play this rotten trick on me?" he demanded hotly. "Are you going to take advantage of a perfectly insane will and cheat me out of what's honestly mine? Or are you kidding me? If you are, I've had about enough of it."

"I mean every word," she returned, with not a little asperity. "And I'm not cheating you. You've made a mess of your life, left to yourself. Now I'm going to help you. I'm tired of suffering for your sins!" Suddenly the quality of her voice changed completely and her eyes glistened sugges-

tively. "Oh, Roger lad, can't you understand? Can't you see that I do so want you to make something of yourself? You're the only thing I have in the world. Can't you see how it hurts me to have people feel a contempt for you? I'm the only mother you've ever had. I know I haven't done a millionth part of what I should have done for you. I've failed — miserably. I know that. All your weaknesses are due to me. You aren't to blame. This is my last chance. You're slipping, Roger — slipping down. This is my last chance to catch you — before — before . . . it's too late. Judge Wolcott agrees: I talked it over with him. Oh, I'm sorry, lad. You haven't an idea how sorry! It breaks my heart to be cruel to you this way — but I've got to be, Roger. I've got to be — can't you understand? Please say you do." She put her arms around his neck and laid her cheek against his. But he shook her off roughly.

"That's all very fine talk," he snapped savagely, "but it doesn't mean anything. Who the devil is old Wolcott to worry about my morals . . . ?"

"As Molly's father he . . ."

"Molly can take care of herself. But that isn't the point. What I want to know is where Wolcott gets the right to monkey with my affairs. And as for you — if you're going to cheat me out of what's

mine — for the love of heaven, do it, but don't make it worse with all this high and mighty talk. It makes me tired."

"Please, Roger . . ." The tears in her eyes were plain now.

"Maybe I am all the pleasant things you say I am. Maybe I haven't got sense enough to take care of my own money. But what are you? I never noticed any wings on your shoulders."

"You don't understand. I . . ."

"Understand? Of course I don't understand. That's why I'm asking the question. If I'm what you say I am — what are you? Where'd you get your preaching card?"

"What difference does it make what I am?"

"It makes a lot of difference. If you're so hot on reforming me, why don't you take a crack at yourself? I don't see that you're so almighty angelic. What have *you* ever done in the world? You can play the piano after a fashion and sing, and talk a little French, and play cards and smoke cigarettes and drink cocktails and . . . well, what else can you do? You spend twice as much money as I do, and I'll be hanged if I can see that you spend it to much better advantage. If I'm a waster and no account and a bad egg, you're one too. The only difference is that you wear skirts and I don't. Well — why don't you answer me?"

He towered over her, white with his rising rage.

"I say, why don't you answer me?" he repeated hotly.

"You don't need to be rude," she answered, her voice trembling.

"I'm not rude. I'm simply putting the same question to you that you put to me. You held the mirror up to me. You can't squeal if I do the same by you. You wanted to know what I had ahead, what I thought about things, where I stood, and all that. Well, what do *you* think about things? Where do you stand? What are you? Turn about's fair, isn't it?"

Judith sought shelter in dignity. She raised her head coldly. "I think there is nothing more to be said. I think you had better go to bed."

"No," he sneered bitterly; "there isn't anything more. You're dealing the cards. But it's a darned rotten deal, just the same. If you've got a clear conscience you've got a devil of a lot more than I'd have if I was in your shoes."

With which bit of self-depreciation Roger stalked dignifiedly, if a trifle unsteadily, out of the room.

Judith remained as he left her, with her chin in her hand, staring into the empty fireplace. Once or twice she brought her handkerchief to her eyes. Her brother's angry words had stung her far more cruelly than she was willing to admit. His counter

arraignment of her had struck home. What was she, what did she think about things? In her zeal for him, had she not overlooked herself?

She cast her eyes around the room, reeking with the sweet sickliness of dead cigarettes. She thought of the high stakes that had passed at her tables, she saw again the wan, tired, hard faces of the players, their feverish, greedy fingers; and she heard, as in an echo, their blithe cruelties, their empty blandishments. And these people, she reflected bitterly, were her friends — the only ones she had.

Roger had put the question to her squarely. What was she? The words struck her like a blow in the face. And what did she think — about anything? And the weight of the question was none the lighter for being asked for the second time in the same day. Roger the immature boy over whom she had allowed herself to stand in judgment, and Brent Good, the pitiful vagabond, had both weighed her in the balance and found her wanting.

She shuddered at the arid uselessness of what she called her mind. The grotesque procession of her daily thoughts passed before her in review. She tried to close her eyes and shut the ghastly picture out, but could not.

Riches, health, intelligence of a sort — these things were hers. What had she done with them? The answer hurt, almost physically. Emptiness,

idleness, futility . . . was there anything else in herself, her friends, her whole life? Had she justified existence?

Suddenly she realised that it was cold. She shivered, and turned out the light.

II

Roger awoke the following morning in a repentant mood. Slowly and painfully he marshalled the facts of the preceding evening, dim and hazy some of them, while others stood out with humiliating and alarming distinctness. And the more he analysed them, the more unpleasantly he became aware that Judith had been in deadly earnest. In his first hopelessness, he caught illogically at one faint chance. His sister's great fear seemed to be that this latest escapade might leak out. The fight had been the starting point of all her amazing change of front. Well, he could prevent it from leaking out, by swallowing his pride. Perhaps after all he had been over-hasty.

Accordingly, acting on this new resolution, Roger caught Faxon's eye as they were rising from table, and nodded.

The latter waited. Roger reddened slightly, and was silent until the others were out of earshot. Then he held out his hand.

"I'm sorry, Joe," he said manfully. "I'm a

damn fool when I've got a load. I hope you'll forget anything I may have said or done."

Faxon took the extended hand a little surprisedly.

"Surest thing you know, Roger. And I'm sorry too. I struck at a sober man — you understand, don't you? I was too hasty. One forgets. He hears things — and acts before he thinks. Bad business — but it's over and we'll bury it."

"That's particularly what I want," said Wynrod, with what seemed to Faxon rather unnecessary earnestness. "Absolutely buried. I don't want it to get out at all. I can depend upon Baker . . ."

"And you can depend upon me," said Faxon heartily. "I won't breathe a whisper."

"Thanks." They shook hands gravely, and after an embarrassed little pause, Roger excused himself and went to hunt up his sister.

"About that stuff last night — are you still in earnest?" he asked doggedly, but not unpleasantly.

She looked at him with a curiously tender expression in her eyes, but with her jaw firmly set.

"Absolutely, Roger," she said quietly.

But the outburst she expected did not come. Instead, he looked at her quizzically and smiled.

"Well, sister, maybe there's something in what you say. I've been thinking about it. But you've set me up against an almighty hard proposition. I'm willing — but what on earth can I do?"

Judith was tremendously surprised, although she should not have been, knowing her brother's customary acquiescence in whatever she dictated. But she concealed her amazement and answered him in as matter-of-fact a way as she could muster. And Judith was by no means an inferior actress.

"Why don't you see Judge Wolcott?"

"He's a lawyer."

"I know. But he's interested in all sorts of business matters. And before he went on the bench he was a corporation lawyer. At least he could tell you who to see."

"The idea is not without merit, sister. I think I'll see the Judge on Monday. And then watch little Roger proceed to climb the dizzy heights of industry. I'll show you a thing or two about him you never guessed."

Judith's eyes filled with tears and she threw her arms about his neck. "Oh, Roger — you're fine. And I *am* cruel to you. I haven't any business to treat you this way. You're so much bigger than I am. You'll make a success — a great success. I know you will. And I will be so proud of you!"

The possibility was a novel one. Roger considered it carefully, for a moment. "By Jove, you will!" he cried finally. "I'll be hanged if you won't," he added with enthusiasm. He wondered why the tears seemed to well the faster in his sister's eyes.

CHAPTER III

"YOU DON'T KNOW MR. IMRIE"

THE news of Judith's "mad whim" spread rapidly through Braeburn, and various were the comments it evoked. For the most part they savoured of condolence, although there was some sentimental approbation for what was characterised by one enthusiast as the "nobility" of her course. This had its effect upon Roger, and in time, he also came to feel admiration for her, and then, as a natural consequence of his own participation in the affair, he came to feel an admiration for himself. From out and out hostility to the idea, therefore, he changed insensibly to ardent and voluble sympathy.

At first Judith had admitted to herself quite frankly that the situation bore possibilities of annoyance. Aside from her guest's potentially dangerous familiarity with her daily life, she sensed in him a certain lack of knowledge — or at least of observance — of those social amenities upon which her training, more than her instinct, let her to place considerable emphasis. It was with this feeling of an unbridgeable gulf between them, that she approached their first meeting after the accident. And

it was with no little embarrassment, therefore, that she entered his room.

The lines of pain had disappeared from his face, and the removal of the stubble which had covered his chin when they had had their first encounter, together with his rest, and — though she did not suspect that — several meals much more bounteous than those to which he was accustomed, had improved his appearance surprisingly. He greeted her unaffectedly.

"Hello," he said. "I've been waiting to see you. I can't begin to tell you how grateful I am for — all this."

"And I," she cried, "can't begin to tell you how sorry I am that it all happened. I . . ."

"Well, then," he said with a smile which revealed two rows of strong, even and very white teeth, "let's not either of us try."

That seemed to break the ice, and because he appeared to feel no embarrassment, she found that hers had quite left her. Before she realised it, the morning was well advanced, and when she left him it was with a curious feeling that they had known each other for years and years . . . very well.

And that was only the beginning of the very odd, but very real, friendship which sprang up between them. It would have surprised — perhaps shocked — her friends to know how much time she spent

with him; but it would have shocked them still more to know the topics of the conversations between them. She herself was amazed every time she left him; not at the range and depth of his interests and his knowledge — but at her own. He seemed to evoke ideas and words that she had never dreamed were there. It struck her as little short of sorcery.

But the situation was not wholly pleasant. There were little rifts to mar the lute. The first came after several weeks. It was Roger who introduced it.

"Say, Judith," he said suddenly, one night at dinner, "Good's going to be up and around pretty soon. You can't keep him cooped up there forever, you know. When are you going to have him down to meals?"

He voiced a question which had been occurring with troublesome frequency in her own mind. She was silent for a moment, as she struggled with a decision she could no longer evade. It was a curious predicament in which events had placed her — not easy to understand readily. It was indisputable that Good was ignorant of either the theory or practice of those conventions of the table upon which, against her will, she set much store. It was equally certain that he was quite conscious of his deficiencies in that respect. Were she in his place, she told herself, she would prefer not to suffer the embarrassments

which the contrasts between themselves and him must entail. But on the other hand, did she not perhaps over-emphasise his sensitiveness, and was it not more than probable that to his sense of proportion her conception of the *manner* of human intercourse was absurd, if not pitiful? She found herself in a situation where, in an effort to be kind, she might be cruel. And what was to her merely tact, might be to him pure snobbishness. That settled the problem. She could not risk even the appearance of pettiness. The decision made her realise, as nothing else had, how much his judgments had come to mean to her.

"You're right, Roger," she said finally; "we'll have him down to-morrow."

Roger looked at her quizzically.

"Where?" he asked.

"Where?" She affected bewilderment.

"Yes. Here . . . or alone . . . or . . .?"

She struggled momentarily.

"Why, here — of course — with us," she said firmly. Then very quickly, and with finality, she changed the subject. It was a trifling incident; but had she settled all later problems as she settled that one, the course of her life would have been changed completely.

These were agreeable days, on the whole, for Judith and her guest, but not for Roger. Pursuant

to his sister's ultimatum and his own high resolution taken thereon, he had fared forth, paladin-like, to conquer that mysterious world wherein men bought and sold all manner of things, not excluding themselves. But it had proven anything but the high road to glory that he had secretly anticipated; he shivered lances daily with an intangible enemy which neither showed its face nor gave its name, but before which he seemed quite powerless.

He had gone first, as he said he would, to Judge Wolcott, and had, with perhaps less humility than he himself thought he was displaying, but with more than might naturally have been expected, announced his readiness to consider any satisfactory (emphasised) "position" to which he might be directed.

To his resentment, not to say surprise, the Judge had first laughed unrestrainedly. But on realising the offence he was giving, which Roger was at no pains to conceal, he had become quite serious, and had directed the young man to a number of gentlemen, whose names he wrote out on a bit of cardboard.

These gentlemen, however, had proved to have their habitat behind corps of more or less impertinent menials. It had required very explicit answers to what he considered a great number of entirely unnecessary questions before he earned even the privilege of having his card presented.

Once in the inner sancta, however, he had been treated most courteously, the objects of his calls being impressed with the name of Wynrod no less than with that of Wolcott. But after the exchange of sundry pleasantries and compliments, he had invariably been shunted, though with exquisite tact and delicacy, on to someone else.

He had found this process of education in the ways of the business world excessively tiresome; but there was in his character a powerful, if inconspicuous, vein of obstinacy, and he stuck grimly to the task in hand. But he was nothing if not human, and his constant failure gradually wore down his courage. To advance slowly would be hard enough, he told himself; but not to move at all was altogether disheartening.

The natural consequence of it all was that he went into town later and later, and came out earlier and earlier. There even came days when he did not go in at all.

And the consequence of that was that he saw more and more of Good, with the result that he fell under the stranger's spell even more completely than his sister had.

In that fact, curiously enough, Judith found something to reconcile her with the lad's failure to consummate the task she had set for him. He might spend his time with worse men, she told herself, than

with Brent Good. But she saw to it that the latter's hours were not wholly spent with Roger.

As the stranger grew in strength, she procured him a pair of crutches, and with their aid, and that of the motor-car, they were able to take little jaunts off into the surrounding country-side. On these trips it almost brought the tears to her eyes to perceive the exquisite pleasure the sight and the smell of growing things seemed to give him.

"I've never known anyone who enjoyed the country as much as you do," she said one day, after he had waxed particularly enthusiastic over a view from one of the near-by hills.

"I've never seen anything but city," he answered. Then he added very simply: "I was pretty nearly a man before I saw my first cow." His brow clouded reminiscently, and although she ached to draw him out on his past, his evident unwillingness to speak of it further made her hesitate.

Only once did he make any other reference to his childhood. She had been saying how difficult it was to make people spell her name correctly.

"You don't have any difficulty there," she added.

"Not much," he admitted. "Queer name, isn't it," he said after a pause. "Queer the way I got it, too. Like to hear about that?"

She smiled at the innocence of the query, but forced herself merely to nod her head.

He smiled, and a curious expression of tenderness came into his eyes.

"You see, I was born without a name. That is, I never had any parents — or never knew who they were, which amounts to the same thing. I was just one of those nameless little scraps of a city's flotsam that get found on people's doorsteps every now and then. That is, I think I was. I guess I was about five when I began to be conscious of self. As far back as I can remember, I was selling chewing gum and getting food by begging from restaurants at night and sleeping in doorways and packing-boxes. Then I sold newspapers, and got prosperous, and when I was about ten — I guess it was ten — you see, I don't really know even how old I am — I got into the hands, somehow or other, of an old Jew rags-old-iron man." He was silent for a moment, and the expression of tenderness spread over his whole face. "He was a good sort — that old kike. He fed me as well as he could — which wasn't very well — and taught me to write and figure and read — good books too. I knew the Public Library better than you know your own house. He didn't just make me read books — he made me like them. He'd come from Russia where he couldn't get them, and he knew what books were. What your Church and brother and friends and home are to you, books were to old Zbysko. He taught me to love them,

too. He did lots of things for me when doing things wasn't easy. And he gave me the only name I ever had."

"Your name? I don't understand."

"Yes, the old chap was a great believer in patent medicines. He honestly thought the men who made them were philanthropists. He gave me the name of one of them." He laughed reminiscently. "I suppose I have one of the best known names in the world! I see it everywhere."

"And the old man . . . ?"

"They didn't *call* it starvation — doctors never do name things right. I think I was about thirteen then. They tried to send me to an institution, but I ran away. I've shifted for myself since."

He lapsed into silence, and Judith could get no more out of him that day. He was too obviously busy with his memories.

One Sunday morning, about a month or so after the accident, Judith was struck by a whimsical idea. She broached it to her guest immediately.

"Mr. Good," she said at breakfast, "I have a favour to ask of you . . ."

"It's granted already," he said gallantly.

"Wait — it may not prove so easy. I know you don't care for church-going, but I want you to go with me — this morning."

He looked dejected. "I should be delighted — honestly. But look —" He indicated his old brown suit, which in spite of the constant and earnest endeavours of Roger's valet, still looked indisputably shabby.

"No matter. We'll go late and sit in the back and nobody will see us. But here's the real favour. There's to be a clergyman out from the city, this morning, who is a friend of mine. Arnold Imrie is to preach, and . . ."

"Is Arnold coming?" broke in Roger. "By George, I'll go myself. He's a wonder."

"That's what I wanted to find out," said Judith. "That is, I want to find out if *you* think so, Mr. Good. The people here think just that. I want to get your opinion."

"That's hardly fair, is it, Miss Wynrod? He's a personal friend of yours, and you know already what I think of church — yet you want my opinion of both."

"No — not both; just the man."

Good shook his head. "I doubt if they can be separated," he said dubiously.

"Well, we'll worry about that later. It's settled that you'll come?"

"Of course, but —"

"Thank you. I'll be ready in a minute."

All the way to the church Good protested that she was taking an unfair advantage of him. But Judith refused to heed his protests.

They paused for a moment on the low rise overlooking the church, to survey it. Judith was very fond of its weathered grey stones, almost buried in the luxuriant ivy. She had been christened and confirmed in it, and the stained glass windows at opposite ends of the transept — masterpieces they were, too — were gifts of hers, in memory of her long-dead father and mother. It was an exquisite little edifice, a genuine bit of Tudor, without a particle of "adaptation," looking as if it had been transplanted bodily from some English vale, together with the soil upon which it stood, and the well trimmed trees which surrounded it. She felt a little catch in her throat, as the memories clustered before her.

"Pretty, isn't it?"

"Yes," said Good slowly. "It's pretty . . ."

She did not like the hesitant qualification implied in his tone.

"Is there a reservation?"

"Well,"— he cocked his head on one side, and knitted his brows. "Yes. It's too beautiful. It's beauty in the wrong place. The people out here have beauty enough without it. I'd like it better if it was in the city — in the heart of the city — with its trees and its vines and its grass. It's needed

more there." Then he laughed. "Oh, Miss Wynrod, you must be careful what you ask me. I'm a queer fellow. Most of the things you think are all right, I think are all wrong. You'd have to have lived my life to see things the way I see them."

She was vaguely disappointed and hurt, and she made no attempt to reply. Every now and then he did bewilder her by flights of thought which she found herself incapable of following. Usually she tried to argue, but the little church was too intimate a thing for that. She said nothing, and silently they went on into it.

She had timed their arrival carefully so as to get there just before the sermon, and unobtrusively they slipped into one of the side pews in the rear. But the building was so small that they had a very good view of the Reverend Arnold Imrie, sometime stroke of the Yale crew, Fellow of Oxford, and one of the strongest heads that ever succumbed to a Heidelberg *kneipe*.

He was a well-built, good-looking young man, with close cropped curly blonde hair, and a clear skin and eyes. His complexion was ruddy, but bronzed, as if he were still not unused to out-of-doors. Yet there were two lines between his eyes, and a stoop to his shoulders that seemed to betoken an equal familiarity with the study. Indeed his whole manner and appearance gave the same para-

doxical impression. It seemed to Good, as he studied him, that Doctor Imrie was the product of a victory of the mind over the body. He was the conscious ascetic, triumphing over the instinctive sensualist. It was not hard to imagine that the clergyman was very fond of the good things of the world, however much he might neglect them in favour of the things of the spirit.

And in that estimate he was substantially correct. Imrie had gone into the ministry, not really from choice, but from a painfully acute sense of duty inherited from his Knoxian forbears. Contradicting an abounding vitality was an overwhelming consciousness of sin, based, it must be confessed, on a fair modicum of actuality, impelling him, irresistibly, toward a fear and a hatred of the flesh. Some men enter the Church positively, out of love for their God and their fellow men: but Imrie had entered it negatively, from a fear and a distrust of the devil in himself. Of his fellow men, in the mass, at least, he never thought at all.

All these things Good sensed very clearly. But, he thought to himself, Imrie was a young man, whose life had progressed in one channel . . . and there were a great many channels in the world. If anything should ever occur to move him from his channel, a great many things might happen. There were

more Imries than the congregation, gazing respectfully with tranquil eyes, saw.

It was quite characteristic of Imrie's neglect for the human equation in life, that he should choose for his text that morning, the Evils of Idleness — when fully two-thirds of his auditors represented the very apotheosis of idleness. But it was equally explanatory of his popularity among them. He had the faculty, wholly unconscious though it was, of being able to castigate them eloquently for their sins, but in such an abstract and impersonal fashion as to leave them quite untroubled at its close.

His words, now, uttered with unquestioned sincerity, were hot and forceful, his logic clear, his conclusions inescapable. He spoke eloquently, his manner was impressive, and his delivery beyond criticism. His hearers gave him their closest attention. Many of them heard so well that later they would recall graphic bits, to quote, and to use as explanation of their admiration of him. But not a brow clouded. Not a soul was pained. He never perturbed his congregation. Judge Wolcott expressed its feelings when he said, "I like to hear Arnold preach because it brightens the day for me." Imrie was hardly a Savonarola.

They had had disagreeable preachers at Braeburn, once or twice. One was a particular disap-

pointment. He was a missionary bishop from somewhere in Africa, and the renown of his exploits had filled every seat. But he proved to be an unattractive little man, with a falsetto voice and shabby clothes, who not only spoke very badly, but who said some very unnecessary and unpleasant things. Arnold Imrie was different. He spoke their language, and they understood him. He was one of them. He had grown up in their midst. Many of them called him by his first name. He was perhaps a trifle too serious to people who found life rather more amusing than otherwise, but on the whole they thought him more than satisfactory. He was a gentleman. He was good. He was sincere. He was orthodox. He never failed to point out the error of their ways — but he never failed to do it with subtlety. And in a day when so many clergymen were allowing themselves to wander into undesirable, if not absolutely forbidden fields, he stuck to religion, where he belonged. And he was not only delightful in the pulpit, but one could ask him to dine, with perfect confidence in the result. As Good listened he turned to survey the congregation. There was unqualified approval on every face. He listened for a moment or two longer. Then he smiled faintly, as one might at a play he has seen several times, and fell to counting the ticking of his

watch, wondering how much longer the sermon would last.

Nor was his impatience lost on Judith.

But Imrie never preached long sermons. In a very few minutes he had wound up with his usual stirring peroration, and left the pulpit. Good had an almost irresistible impulse to clap, not as expressing approbation, but admiration for a difficult task well done. He smiled — not wholly pleasantly — at the look of devout complacency on the faces of all the well dressed men and women about him. Not one, he reflected, who had listened so attentively to this stirring denunciation of idleness, knew what real *toil* was — or had any desire to know. He wanted to rush to the pulpit himself — and tell them what it was. But he followed Judith out quietly enough.

She had planned their exit so as to be well in advance of the crowd, but she could not miss them all. She was irritated at the curious glances flung at her and her companion, though she tried not to notice them. It was only when a bow was quite unavoidable that she acknowledged it. She was angry with herself for her self-consciousness. But when she glanced at her companion, with his spotted, weather-beaten, shapeless suit, and his antiquated, sun-burned hat, not to speak of his lean and angular figure; and

then at her own trim presence, she had to smile. They did present a curious spectacle, and the covert smiles were justified. Still — she was honest enough to admit it — it would please her more to see Good somewhat better dressed. It did not occur to her that it would please him too.

They walked along slowly for a little while, in silence. Good was the first to speak.

"The inside was beautiful, too. That carved oak was fine. Just enough carving. Not too much. Usually there is. And the windows — the sunlight filtering in through that one on the left was like the organ when the vox humana pedal is on — all shimmering. It was very beautiful. So restful. All churches should be like that. The Catholics have the right idea. It . . ."

"And the sermon?" she broke in quizzically.

He stopped short and looked at her narrowly. Her faint smile was not lost on him.

"Now, Miss Wynrod — that isn't fair," he expostulated. "I told you not to do that. Really . . ."

"But that's what I brought you for," she said. "Of course you like the church. Anyone would. But I want to know about the rest of it. You promised, you know."

He studied her thoughtfully. "Well," he said finally, "let's wait till we get to that bosky dell up there. Then we can sit down and have it out."

When they were seated, Good fell to toying with a stick, and making little circles in the sand. She waited patiently for him to begin. Finally he raised his head and looked at her half timorously from under his bushy eyebrows.

"You won't be angry or disgusted if I tell you what's on my mind?" he inquired.

"Have I ever been?"

"No — you've been quite remarkable in that respect," he admitted. "But this is different."

"Go on — don't excuse yourself any more."

"Well, his text . . . they nearly lynched a priest out in Colorado for that. You see, he was preaching to strikers, and when he told them that idleness was the root of all evil . . . you couldn't hardly blame them, now could you?"

She laughed at that. "But there aren't any strikers here," she persisted.

"No, but to talk about idleness is almost as pointless here as there. Why didn't he say something that would get under their hides? Look at them coming up the street. Do they look as if they had been filled with a fear of the Lord?"

"Do you think people go to church to be frightened?"

"I'm sure I don't know why they go," he said cheerfully. "I never could. I'd rather do almost anything. Church-going always irritates me. The

preachers are so spineless — like this Mr. Imrie. He had a good theme. But he didn't carry it out. Maybe he didn't know how. Maybe he didn't dare . . ."

"You don't know Mr. Imrie," she said. "He'd dare — anything."

"All right. But that doesn't change what would happen if he did dare, or did know. I've read the Bible quite a bit. Suppose Jesus came back and got up in the pulpit and lit into his congregation the way he lit into the money changers —'vipers' and all that? Why, the vestry would have his scalp before the sun set, wouldn't they?"

"You seem to be rather hostile to religion, Mr. Good," said Judith, vaguely offended.

He shrugged his shoulders in a manner indicative of helpless annoyance.

"Oh, Miss Wynrod — I didn't expect that of you. That's what they all say. Roast the established Church and they call you an atheist or worse. I'm not opposed to religion — why should I be? I can't say I dislike the air I breathe, can I? But I haven't much use for an organisation that doesn't live up to its confession of faith. Here are your Christian Churches, founded on a rebellion against hypocrisy and privilege and materialism, deliberately encouraging complacency and selfishness and peace and quiet and oh — everything that its founder got cru-

cified for. I've come to know Jesus pretty well. I like him. He's the kind of leader men want to follow. If he was alive to-day I'd be one of his lesser disciples. And I'll bet a dollar that all your eloquent, dogmatic, spiritual, irrelevant Imries would be running to the local Pilate to have us jugged!"

"What makes you think you know Jesus better than — our Imries?" she asked softly.

"I don't," he answered earnestly. "Knowing people is a subjective affair. I know you as one person. Your brother knows you as another. You may know yourself as very different from either of the two. It's the same way with Jesus. We both made his acquaintance in the same way, so we are both entitled to our opinion. But look here. You think Imrie's nearer to Jesus than I am, don't you?"

"Why, really, I . . ." she stammered and coloured slightly.

"Of course you do. Well, I ask you this. Do you honestly think that Imrie's Jesus — the Jesus he serves up to you on Sundays,— the cold, logical, snobbish abstraction — would ever have gotten anybody so sore that they'd crucify him? Of course you don't. Well what do you think that congregation would do to me if I got up in the pulpit and gave *my* Jesus — the fiery, human, uninspired, blood-red revolutionary that I conceive him to be? You know without my telling you. Why, they'd have me arrested

if I used his own thoughts expressed in modern language — yes, if I used his actual words — and *applied* them. Suppose Imrie took that stuff about the millstone, and applied it to Corey's cash girls and delivery boys. Do you think the old man would be anxious to hear Imrie again?"

"You seem to have thought a great deal about Jesus," said Judith, with a faintly veiled sarcasm. But he did not sense that.

"Yes," he said naïvely. "Haven't you?"

She was silent at the unconscious rebuke, profoundly stirred by the paradoxicality of the situation. She wanted to answer him in the affirmative, wanted to very, very much. But she knew that she could not. Jesus was not the living, breathing companion of every day that he seemed to be to this irreverent infidel. He was far more sacred to her, but far less a vital factor in the commonplaces of existence. She was honest enough to admit it. But he appeared not to notice her tacit confession.

"You see," he went on patiently, as if expounding a very simple problem to a rather young and stupid child, "your stained-glass faith isn't founded on Jesus at all. You're a Paulist. Like him, you're a Roman citizen, an aristocrat, a mystic. Jesus wasn't any of those things. He was the next thing to a slave, a man of the common people, and for all purposes of comparison, a thorough-going materialist.

He had no dogma to preach, other than that the kingdom of the earth should belong to the dwellers therein. But Paul was a different sort of chap. He changed the propaganda so that it read 'kingdom of heaven,' which was a very different thing, and much more comfortable for the shaking seats of the mighty. Then the Greek philosophers got interested in that strange abortion called Christianity, added Eleusinian mysteries and what not, devised the doctrine of the immaculate conception to cover the illegitimacy of Jesus, adapted the idea of the trinity from Egyptian theology and . . ."

"You must study a great deal, too?" she asked, breaking in on the fluent rush of his words.

"Yes," he said, almost apologetically; "it's great stuff. I like it."

Again she was silenced by the ingenuousness of his reply. She was puzzled. She had thought she possessed a religion of conviction, but she realised, in a sudden panic, that she had not. She had been born to her faith as she had been born to her wealth and her position in society. She did not dodge the consequent thought — it could be taken from her as easily as the other things. This vagabond before her had been born with nothing — not even a name — but what he had was his own. His very impudence before sacred matters, the freedom with which he disregarded the eminence of people and ideas, betokened

his superiority to her. She wanted to be disdainful, angry, displeased with him. She could not be. She was humbled before the power of his faith, as she had never in her life been humbled before the faith of Imrie. Though Good did not suspect it, she was, in a way, at a crisis.

She was silent for a little while. Then she rose with a smile.

"Well, Mr. Good, I'm not a match for you in these matters, but Mr. Imrie is coming to supper tonight and you can have it out with him face to face."

"I'd be glad to," said Good as he scrambled to his feet, very awkwardly. "But it wouldn't be any use. That's another reason for my dislike of clergymen. You can't argue with them. The major premise, though it isn't expressed of course, when you start off, is that they are right and you are wrong. They are trying to convince you — always — never to learn. They can go back to supernatural inspiration and I can't — so the argument stops before it starts. You can't do much, you know, with a man who's absolutely convinced that he's got a pipe line direct to eternity. But I'll be polite to him. I'll try to forget that he's a parson and only remember that he's your friend."

Judith smiled furtively at this magnanimous offer. It was so characteristic of the man. If there was a drop of sycophantic blood in his veins, he had yet to

reveal it. And it was this sublime confidence in himself which formed one of his most potent charms for her. From birth she had been waited upon, with varying degrees of servility, depending upon the station and the hopes of those who waited. There were servants. There were young men, of varying degrees of attractiveness, station, and impecuniousness, who wanted to marry her. There were beggars, of varying degrees of honesty, who wanted her to aid them. There were the proponents of various charitable schemes, with varying degrees of sincerity and intelligence, who wanted her to sign the cheques. And in addition to those who merely wanted money, were the great swarm of both sexes, who sought the smile of her social favour, who delighted to be seen with her, to have her accept their attentions, to be invited to her functions. There had been very few people in her life who were there with a wholly disinterested purpose. And even the individuals who were disinterested — or whom she thought disinterested — had relatives who were not. In spite of her temperament, the circumstances of her birth and wealth had forced her to surround herself with a well-defined armour of suspicion. In Good's lack of reverence, of tact, of taste, of manners, of anything approaching the conventions which made up her life, she found what she had craved. Of his utter clarity of soul there could be no doubt. She never once even

suspected that he had a thought which he considered worth uttering, which, from motives of expediency, he did not utter. She had given him food and lodging. He had given her — all he had to give — his open heart. It was clear that he thought they were quits. And she was glad that he did. It was her first experience of such an exchange.

She smiled again as she recalled his promise not to enter into debate with Imrie. He would treat Imrie kindly — for her sake. How Arnold would fume if he knew of such forbearance. And if Good only knew what he was saying . . . well, she reflected, he would doubtless say it just the same!

At supper, true to his promise, Good was extremely taciturn. He appeared respectfully interested in all that Imrie had to say, joked pleasantly with Roger, was politely intimate with Judith, and to her very great astonishment, even went so far as to tell several very entertaining anecdotes of his experiences in the diamond mines of South Africa.

"Why," she cried, "I never knew you had been there."

"No," he said, with a twinkle in his eye and a dry little twist to his lips, "I never told you."

But after that he relapsed into comparative silence, and shortly after the meal, excused himself rather deftly, though none the less certainly, and went to his room.

Roger, as usual, had an engagement elsewhere, and presently he, too, departed. Judith and Imrie were left alone.

"That was a splendid sermon, Arnold," she said, with an effort at enthusiasm, and a subconscious question as to whether she really meant what she said.

Imrie was thoughtful. "I did my best. The congregation seemed to like it. But it could be done much better."

"So could most things."

"Perfection is no trifle, is it," he smiled. "But let's not talk of such dreadful things as sermons. I haven't seen you for ages . . ."

"Six weeks, to be exact," she interrupted.

"Exactly!" he thanked her with his eyes for the implication, and woman-like, she took away his pleasure deliberately.

"The accident happened the day after you left."

"Oh." He was silent for a moment. "That was a splendid thing, Judith — your taking that fellow in. Just like you. But hasn't he been something of a — well, a care?"

"On the contrary. I've enjoyed him intensely."

"But don't you find him — a little uncouth?" he persisted.

"Yes — very. But a little roughness is a relief after too much polish, isn't it?"

"Yes, of course," he admitted. "But you

wouldn't confess even if you had been put out. And that's like you, too." He looked at her with an expression in his eyes, the meaning of which there could be no doubt.

"Let's go out on the porch," she said abruptly. "It's so stuffy in here."

The moon was full and it shone over a picture of loveliness. Below them, as they sat on the stone balustrade of the terrace, stretched Judith's immaculate gardens, redolent with the soft perfume of sweet pea and mignonette. As the breeze faintly stirred the leaves, the shadows danced fantastically on the sod. Over in the velvet depths of the sunken tennis courts, the fireflies flashed their lanterns incessantly. Somewhere in the distance a guitar sounded now and again, and a woman's voice rose and fell softly. It was very peaceful and pleasant, and Imrie, thinking of the hot city and the morrow, drew a deep sigh. No power on earth could prevent him from going back — but he did not pretend to think that he wanted to go.

"Don't you ever wonder what those crickets are saying?" asked Judith, conscious instinctively that her companion's eyes still burned with the same light. "Just listen to them."

"I'd rather have you listen to me," said Imrie in a choking voice, as if struggling to control himself. Suddenly his hand shot out and caught hers in a grip

like iron. "I want to tell you how much I love you!" he whispered passionately.

She looked at him for a long time without replying, and he could see by the movement of the shadows on her face, that her lip quivered. Her eyes glistened, too. Then, very slowly and thoughtfully, she withdrew her hand.

"It isn't fair, it isn't fair," she repeated dully. "You promised not to."

"I know, I know — but I can't help it, my darling. I love you so much. Nothing else matters. I can't help telling you. I looked for you in church this morning and when I couldn't find you, it was so hard to go on. I didn't care, after that. It's that way always. With you beside me — it would be so different. Can't you . . . don't you feel . . . any different?"

She shook her head sadly. It was hard to refuse Imrie — a million times harder than all the rest. That he loved her truly, there was no doubt in her mind. Of the others, she was not so sure. But she did not love him, and it hurt tremendously to tell him so. She could not tell why. He always begged her to give a reason, and she never could. He was a good man, and an attractive man. There was nothing lacking. As candid old Mrs. Waring had told her, "Don't be a silly, my dear. You could not possibly do better." She believed that, too. Imrie

was as near her ideal as she had ever ventured to formulate one. And yet . . .

"But I thought . . . the last time . . ." he was saying. "It seemed as if . . . there was more hope. And now . . . it seems as if there was less. Why, my dearest? Have you changed? What have I done? What haven't I done? You seem further away from me now than ever . . . won't you ever come to me . . . is it always to be 'the desire of the moth for the star' . . . please speak to me, darling . . . please . . ."

His voice broke under the stress of his emotion. Never had she seen him so moved. She marvelled at it. She had a turbulent wish to ask him why he never lost himself like that in his pulpit — and immediately afterwards wondered where such an outrageous, irreverent thought could have come from. That was not like her. But she knew very well who it was like.

"Is there — someone else?"

The question made her start guiltily. She was glad that her face was in shadow.

"Was there?" she asked herself. Then the absurdity of the thought made her smile to herself.

"No," she said firmly. "There is no one else."

"Then perhaps . . . ?" His voice trailed off.

"Yes," she said mechanically, as one who answered a question without hearing it, "perhaps."

It was hard to refuse Imrie—a million times harder than all the rest

They were silent, then, for a long time. Finally Imrie held out his hand. His face, clear in the moonlight, was drawn and seemed pallid. He was visibly affected.

"I'm sorry, Judith," he said, with a perceptible tremor in his voice, "but I can't help it. Sometime — perhaps . . ."

"Yes." Her eyes filled with tears again, and she dared not trust herself to speak. She wanted to throw her arms around his neck and comfort him. But she would do it as she would comfort Roger — and he would know that. So she held out her hand.

"I'm sorry, too, Arnold. But let us be the good friends we have always been, anyway."

She regretted that, as she saw him wince. It was not friendship that he wanted. But she forced herself to finish in that key. It was safest.

"I hope the plans for the new church are getting on famously?"

"Yes," he said apathetically. "It's doing very well."

"You must bring out the sketches and let me see them. I'm tremendously interested."

"I will — mail them to you," he said heavily. Slowly, as if reluctant, he took her hand again, held it just a moment, and then, with a suddenness that overwhelmed her, seized her in his arms and kissed her hotly on the lips. Then, like a shadow, he fled.

For a long time after he had gone Judith sat on the balustrade, listening to the myriad noises of the night, and pondering on what had befallen her. It had been a very eventful day. She smiled as she pondered on its contrasts. But she sobered as she thought of Imrie. She felt her cheek grow warm as she recalled his kiss. Then a faint smile widened her lips at the impetuosity of it. It was so unlike him. He had never shown such — she knew he would call it disrespect — but that was not the word she would use. She hoped he would not apologise. That would spoil it all. Perhaps — if he were a little less respectful . . .

She could love Imrie the man, she reflected, as she walked slowly into the house. But Imrie the clergyman — she knew for a certainty that that was impossible.

CHAPTER IV

OIL AND WATER

I

"You see, Miss Wynrod, I'm as sound as a nut. I can gambol like a lamb. I am ready again to dance to the world's piping."

It was just six weeks to a day after his introduction to her that Good made this announcement, and executed a lumbering step of his own devising, to prove its truth.

"It's now the season of the sere and yellow leaf. There's work to be done. I must be about it," he added more seriously.

"If you work as you gambol, I shouldn't think you'd be much in demand," laughed Judith.

"Quite so," admitted Good, blithely. "But if my feet are clumsy my wits are nimble. I guess I can find someone to hire them at twelve dollars per week."

"Twelve dollars a week! You don't mean to say . . ."

Good raised his eyebrows. "Why, surely. Does that surprise you? Of course," he added half apologetically, "that doesn't represent my own valua-

tion, by any means. But *The World* is a poor paper for poor people. It couldn't pay much."

"That's all very well," she cried, "but why did you work for it?"

"It needed me," he said simply, and she was silenced. There were stranger things in this man revealed at every conversation. She had never known anyone before who toiled because someone "needed" him. She was shamed by her own amazement.

"I guess I'll go on the 10.46," he said.

"No," she cried. "You won't."

He looked up at her in some surprise.

"That is, you won't," she added more mildly, "if you care to do me a favour."

"What an absurd 'if.' Give your orders."

"Well, I have some people coming to dinner on Wednesday. I — I — want them to know you."

"What a treat!" he said sarcastically.

"I want you to know them, too. You see, they're all rich people. And you've hated them without knowing what very ordinary human beings they really are. I think you owe it to your own sense of fairness to see some of the oppressors of the poor in the flesh."

"It's quite impossible," he declared firmly.

She chose to ignore the finality of his tone.

"It isn't quite just, is it, to write articles about the

feelings and the motives of people you don't really know?"

He strove to divert the argument. "There's something in perspective, you know."

"Before chance threw us together you thought me distinctly wicked. You don't think that now, do you?"

"I told the paper I was in the camps of the Persians," he said sententiously. "They fired me then. Why tarry with the flesh-pots further?"

"I've often heard you say that men couldn't preach heaven until they knew life."

He threw up his hands in exasperation. "It isn't fair for a woman to be logical — it takes a man unawares."

"Then you admit I am logical?"

"Even if I wanted to stay, I couldn't."

"Why not?"

His head drooped and a faint colour showed under the bronze of his skin. But he remained silent.

"What's lacking?"

His discomfort was apparent. "I'd like to fix up a bit — get a hair-cut — and things," he stammered.

"Well, why don't you? You've got two whole days."

Suddenly he straightened, and a smile broke over his reddened features. "There's no use being silly about it, I guess. The fact is — I'm broke."

"Oh, is that all. Well, that's easily fixed. Why didn't you say so before?" she said with a smile. "You ought to take lessons from my brother."

"I don't need all this," he stammered, fingering the bill she held out to him.

"It's the smallest I have. But why didn't you tell me?"

"One doesn't like to beg."

"You're hardly consistent, are you?"

"No, I'm too human."

"Will you be human enough to forsake your principles and come to my party?"

"I'd rather not."

"That's understood. It makes the favour greater. But you will come?"

"If I must."

"I'll be very grateful."

"Then I will." The words came from him with such obvious reluctance that she could not resist a smile.

"Do be back in plenty of time."

"I'd rather break my leg again," he said gloomily. Then declining her offer of the motor-car to take him to the station, he left her.

"You're stealing my class-consciousness from me," he called from the gate way.

She laughed, not quite understanding what he

meant, and watched his ungainly figure until it was out of sight. Would he return? Or had she seen the last of Brent Good? Finally she shrugged her shoulders and tried to dismiss him from her mind.

But when Wednesday came, and no Good, nor word from him, she was more keenly disappointed than she cared to admit. The two o'clock train brought a party which had arranged for some golf with Roger.

"Anyone come out with you?" she asked, as if the question were of no consequence.

"Only Joe Faxon," said one of the men. "He was bound for the Warings'."

At three Molly Wolcott came, only to disappear promptly in the direction of the golf course. At five-thirty all had arrived with the exception of Della Baker, her taciturn husband,— and Good. But on the next train, which was the last, the first two came. She greeted them as gaily as she could, with studied carelessness inquiring if anyone had been left at the station, and when they assured her that no one had, she abandoned hope definitely.

"You have the darkest, lonesomest woods out here I ever saw," cried Della. "I had all sorts of thrills. Every time I saw a man my heart came up in my mouth!"

"That," said her husband cryptically, "is quite as usual."

But Judith heard him only vaguely. She had caught sight of a familiarly angular figure striding briskly up the drive way, looming grotesquely tall in the dusk. She did not follow the others as they went into the house. She remained on the porch, a prey to conflicting emotions. It was with some difficulty that she restrained the laugh which sprang to her lips as Good came into the light from the hall. His hair had been trimmed, his face was newly shaven, and his finger-nails, she noted, as he held out his hand, were cleaner than she had ever seen them. That was enough to amaze her. But when he flung back his long rain-coat, worn in spite of the continued drought of days, and revealed evening dress — her head swam. He was quite conscious of the effect he had made. Indeed, though she made a strong effort, she could not possibly conceal it. But it did not appear to displease him. He smiled like a child, and turned around twice for her inspection.

"Some rags, eh?" he cried, smoothing out the wrinkles. "Sorry the coat doesn't match, but it was the best I could get."

Almost tearfully she joined in his enthusiasm. She shut her eyes to the antiquated cut of the garment, its unmistakable shininess at the elbows, and what must have been apparent even to himself, the fact that it fitted him only, as one might say, inter-

mittently. But he was too pleased to care, if he had noticed such trifles.

"That's really what I needed the money for," he explained. "I wanted to bloom like a green bay tree before your friends. Pretty cute, eh?" He turned around again, and catching sight of himself in the mirror, stood preening like a peacock. "Makes me feel half dressed, though," he admitted somewhat ruefully. "This open-work front . . . I've been trying to hook it together all the way out — but there aren't any hooks! First time I ever wore one of these. Look at the buttons on the vest. Ever seen anything glitter so? I tell you, Solomon in all his glory had nothing on me!"

She had not dressed Roger for nothing, and her keen eye did not miss the numerous minute lapses from perfection in Good's attire. The general effect just missed being what it should be. But his naïve pride was contagious. She found herself forgetting the essential absurdity of his costume in his own unqualified delight.

His collar was prodigiously high, and being so much taller than she, it was impossible for their eyes to meet. He looked for all the world like some grotesque bird, fitted with a more or less painful and wholly unaccustomed harness.

She dropped her handkerchief and as he stooped to pick it up a subdued groan came from him.

" I wonder what maniac ever devised such a shirt," he grumbled. " It's correct — the man told me so — showed me pictures to prove it . . . but it proves that civilisation isn't civilised. Catch a savage in a straight jacket like this — I guess not."

There was a dreadful pause as she entered the library with Good. For a fleeting instant which seemed minutes to her, everyone stared at the newcomer. Then breeding reasserted itself and Judith was able to go through the introductions without further embarrassment. Good stumbled cheerfully over ladies' trains, shook hands vigorously, was uniformly " pleased to meet " everyone, and appeared quite unconscious of the interested, not to say amused gazes which followed him. But Judith could see plainly that he was not sorry when the process of acquainting him with the other guests was over and he could slip out of the conversational maelstrom into the quiet backwaters formed by the space between the piano and the wall, to stand alone in a contemplative and awkward silence. She was relieved, too, when dinner was announced.

She had been in doubt as to just where to place him at the table, but had finally decided on Molly Wolcott. She was a very animated girl, if the companion and the topic interested her, and extraordinarily taciturn if they did not. Her range of interests was not large, being chiefly concerned with

the various ramifications of sport. She had once been known to turn with deliberation from a distinguished British novelist, to a callow youth whose sole claim to distinction lay in having kicked a winning goal.

Judith felt confident that Good would prove quite without attraction for her. But she would, for that very reason, leave him severely alone, and she could, herself, take care of him. With that in view, she had left her own avenues open, by seating at her left a young man whose concerns were almost exclusively gastronomic.

But, as usual, Good surprised her. Molly began, as was to be expected, by giving her partner a cursory examination, and then plunging unceremoniously into a heated discussion of the afternoon's golf, with Roger who sat across the table.

"That was the most inexcusable putt I ever hope to see," she declared.

"I was afraid of it," confessed Roger dejectedly. "That hole looked like the eye of a needle."

"You can't hole short putts without confidence," observed Ned Alder, who was a notoriously bad golfer. "Now I always . . ."

"Why don't you take a course of lessons in confidence?" asked Molly rudely.

"Putting," began Good interrogatively, when the laugh at the allusion to the extent and fruitlessness

of Alder's golf education had subsided, "is . . ."

"The act of putting the ball in the hole," said Molly with a mixture of surprise and impatience in her tone. A sudden silence fell around the board as the entire company listened. The tall stranger, such an object of curiosity to all of them, had spoken for the first time.

"And you call that 'holing,' I believe?" he went on imperturbably.

"Yes," said Roger, sympathetic with Good's isolation.

"And you have to have confidence to do it successfully?"

"Lord, yes," said Alder, under his breath.

"Golf must be a very ancient game," mused Good seriously. The painful silence continued. Judith ached to say something that would rescue him from the clumsy predicament into which he had thrust himself, and she wanted to slap Molly for the expression of supercilious disdain on her face. But no words came for the one and she was not quite atavistic enough for the other.

"Yes, it's mentioned in Scripture," continued Good finally, when the pause had become almost unbearable. "You recall the injunction — something like this —'have faith and it will make thee — hole'?"

The atrocious pun was uttered amid a silence

which needed only a little less tact on the part of those present to make it derisive, and with the speaker looking down at his plate, seemingly oblivious to all his surroundings. For a moment even the quiet noises of service seemed to be stilled. Then, with first a half-intimated gasp of amazement, there was a burst of almost hysteric laughter.

It was a gay and intimate gathering, and Good's contribution to the wit of the evening, served to make him, temporarily at least, part of it. Molly Wolcott's coolness quite deserted her, and with characteristic animation she turned her attention to this curious-looking individual who had the audacity to make bad jokes.

Nor was it a temporary interest. With increasing frequency she laughed aloud. The man on her right joined her. Judith was amazed. She studied Good constantly, not overlooking the fact that his cocktail was untasted. She strained her ears to catch something of what he was saying, but his voice was low, and he seemed to be talking to Molly almost confidentially. Finally, at a particularly uproarious bit of hilarity, she gave way to her curiosity.

"What on earth are you talking about?" she demanded, when a lull in the conversation enabled her to be heard.

"Oh," he said, "I was just telling Miss Wol-

cott about a ball game I pitched in the Philippines. We were playing the 17th Infantry and they got me full of *nepal.* I did some curious things," he added reflectively.

"Were you ever in the army?" she asked in amazement.

"Seven years," he answered. "Enough to be a corporal."

Then he turned back to Molly, and Judith was silent. Would she ever get to the end of his life and the things into which it had led him? She wanted to ask him more, but he was too obviously engrossed in his companion, and as the duties of her own position required attention, she had no further conversation with him.

But as the meal progressed, and the sherry followed the cocktails, and the claret followed the sherry, and the champagne followed the claret, the conversation began to centre more and more around Good. It became almost a monologue, as he talked and they listened.

Judith was mostly silent, in sheer amazement, although occasionally she could not resist a smile at his drolleries. And when he told stories, she laughed with the rest. He possessed a remarkable faculty for imitation, and the characters in his stories required no "he said" to identify them. His voice and manner changed for each one.

Once, in a pause, she interrupted him.

"You ought to be on the stage," she cried admiringly.

"Never again," he said shortly, leaving her once more in dumfounded silence.

Never had she sensed this social side to her strange guest. Her interest in him had been primarily intellectual. He had seemed all serious. She had never forgotten the guise in which he had first appeared to her. But this was so utterly different. She found it impossible to understand.

As she scanned the laughing faces about the board, another curious thing struck her. The array of glasses in front of Good was quite untouched. But the same phenomenon was to be observed in front of her brother. It was the first time she had ever seen that, and as she rejoiced, she marvelled.

It was an unusually effective party, she reflected, as they rose, leaving the men to their cigars and coffee, and the cause of its success was plain. She smiled to herself at the fears with which she had decided upon his presence. She wondered if he guessed how surprised she was.

But later, when the gathering began to disintegrate into little groups of two's and three's, Good became strangely silent. The sparkle had gone out of his eyes, she thought, and with it, the sparkle from his mind. The bursts of laughter became less

frequent, and finally ceased altogether. The lines of his face appeared to droop, as she had rarely seen them, and he stood to one side, rather moodily, as if in contemplation of his companions. His behaviour was singular. But the others appeared to notice nothing untoward. Indeed, many of them had ceased to notice him at all. He was a novelty, and like all novelties and new sensations, with them, he had begun to pall. If he was acting deliberately, she reflected, he was acting not unwisely. He was withdrawing at the apex of his hour.

Very quickly conversation flagged, as she knew it inevitably must. These friends of hers had little to say, she knew, nor said that little long. Bridge was proposed and accepted. Tables were quickly formed, and in a very few moments everyone was engrossed in the play. That is, every one but Della Baker, who had disappeared, pleading a headache, and her silent husband, who loathed cards; and Good, who did not play. Judith saw the two men stroll silently together out onto the terrace; and then, a moment later, through a door on the other side of the room, Molly Wolcott and Roger.

It must be something momentous she reflected, that could entice Molly Wolcott from a game of any sort — particularly if the stakes were likely to be high. And it was.

The momentum in this case was furnished by

Roger with his determined insistence that she have a word with him.

They strolled silently through the garden until they came to one of the stone benches by the tennis courts. Roger made a gallant pretence of dusting it off with his handkerchief. Then he sat down beside her.

"Well," she said, after waiting for him to speak. "What do you want to tell me about?"

Roger lit a cigarette and threw the match away with a truculent gesture.

"You don't need to be so cold-blooded about it," he said irritably.

"About what?" she asked calmly.

"Oh, you know."

"I haven't an idea," she said artlessly.

"Oh, about everything," he stumbled helplessly.

"Everything?" There was an excellent imitation of astonishment in her voice. It brought him sharply to his feet, and he thrust his hands into his pockets with a snort of impatience.

"Yes, of course, my loving you — and all that."

"Oh . . ." Her noncommittal intonation was perfectly calculated.

"Well, I want an answer," he demanded belligerently. "You haven't any right to keep me dangling this way."

"But I gave you an answer."

"Not a definite one."

"I don't know how to make it any more definite. I told you I . . . liked you better than anybody else, and some day, perhaps —"

"Well, that's not definite. Why don't you like me well enough to marry me?"

"Oh, but I do," she insisted warmly.

"You do . . . ?" He was nonplussed by that example of logic.

"Yes, indeed I do."

"Well, why don't you?" There was more than a hint of exasperation in his voice. He was fast losing his temper.

"Because . . ."

"Because why? For goodness' sake, can't you give me a real reason . . . something I can use my teeth on?"

He was striding rapidly up and down in front of her, and his growing wrath was so ill concealed under a very obvious effort at patience, that she could not resist a faint chuckle. He caught it and stopped short.

"You're laughing at me?" he declared, half interrogatively.

"Oh, Roger," she cried, "how could you think that."

"You were . . . I heard you."

"I wasn't."

"Now what's the use of saying that?" he demanded.

"Don't you dare talk to me like that!" She was bolt upright herself, and wrath flamed in her own eyes. "Don't you ever dare use that tone to me, Roger Wynrod."

"I'm sorry," he said humbly, as if he really had committed a crime of incredible enormity. Then with one last gasp of justification, he added a timid "But you did . . ."

She would not allow him to finish. Quite illogically, but quite completely, she had changed the positions. From being the defence she had managed to make herself the prosecution, and Roger, being thoroughly masculine, was utterly dumfounded at the shift. And she, being as equally feminine, took up her new position with renewed vigour. Her voice was full of a most righteous scorn when she spoke.

"I didn't laugh at you. But suppose I did. I'd be justified. Why should I want to marry you? You're not even a man yet. You're just a boy. You've never done anything a man should. You even let that kid Jenkins beat you this afternoon. You're just a good-for-nothing lazybones, that's what you are, and you want me to marry you."

Roger tried unsuccessfully to interrupt her, each time she paused for breath, but it only seemed to

intensify the flow of her condemnation. He grew more and more uncomfortable, because part, at least, of what she said, he knew to be true.

"I didn't mean to start anything like this," he put in mournfully. "I don't know how it ever started."

She did not know either, but she managed to convey to him the conviction that it was most deliberate. And that, as she knew it would, only made him more mournful still. It was in a very chastened voice and manner that he acquiesced in her suggestion that they return to the house.

He would have been astonished, as they walked silently in, had he known the very intense desire that consumed her, to kiss him.

From the funereal aspect of Roger's countenance, and the contented cheerfulness of Molly's, as they entered the room, Judith was able to surmise very shrewdly something of what had taken place. She ached to tell her doleful brother what, with true masculine obtuseness, he never in the world would guess.

Indoors, the evening dragged along, uneventful to the point of stupidity. There was a little excitement, not unmixed with acerbity, when Ned Alder, contrary to his usual habit, proved clever enough with the cards to add a not inconsiderable sum to his already swollen fortune. But his amazed joy was

more than offset by Roger's patent depression and Molly's inexplicable apathy. Altogether it was not as successful a party, as it had given promise of being, and it broke up early.

As the adieus were being said, Judith realised that Good was missing. In the early part of the evening, he had wandered in and out, now watching the play, now chatting momentarily with someone who was free; but had finally disappeared. She could not believe that his unceremonious absence was permanent, although she knew that that was not impossible. So as soon as she could, after attending to the comfort of those who were to spend the night with her, she went in search of him.

II

But while she dallied, Tragedy was stalking in the Wynrod gardens, where only Comedy was meant to play.

Good, after those restless efforts to behave as a gentleman should behave, which Judith had noted, had betaken himself with his musings to the peaceful solitude of the garden. What was a commonplace to the others still bore a singular charm for him. He was content to smoke and dream and watch the shadows at their endless dance. He was vaguely tired, and it was very quiet.

But his peace was short. The sound of whisper-

ing voices came to him through the trees. At first he thought it only the rustling of the leaves. Then the sudden, strangled cry of a woman brought him to his feet, his heart pounding. For a moment he stood listening, every muscle in a tremble. The voices could be heard more clearly now, and they seemed to come from a small summer-house just behind him. He moved slowly toward it.

"I think we'll end this right here." He recognised the voice as Baker's, though unbelievably changed. The words seemed to come through clenched teeth. Another voice — a man's — made some reply, but the chatter of the crickets and the plashing of a fountain prevented him from catching what it was. He relaxed and was about to turn around, when that same agonised choking call smote his ears again. He hesitated no longer.

As he plunged into the little building a branch swayed in the breeze and the moonlight broke through. It revealed two men facing each other. One was Baker. His fist was raised and clenched. The other he could not place for a moment. Then it flashed upon him. He had seen him once before. It was Faxon.

"Now then —" Good's lean wrist shot forward. "Wait a bit." Baker struggled momentarily but futilely. Good was a powerful man when he chose to exert himself.

"Fine business, this," said Good as coolly as if he were inspecting a company on dress parade. "What's the excitement?" As he spoke he was conscious that there was a third person in the shelter, beside the two men — a woman. Then a gleam of light entered momentarily and he realised that it was Baker's wife. With a low whistle he turned to Faxon.

"I guess you'd better scoot," he said calmly, more as an order than as a suggestion. With a not very successful effort at nonchalance Faxon shrugged his shoulders and went out. As he passed Baker the latter moved convulsively, but Good's hand tightened on his arm. When Faxon had gone and was out of earshot, Good released his hold and sat down. Baker stood staring stonily at the figure disappearing in the hydrangeas. His wife, looking very frail and pitiful, had collapsed on the bench, her face buried in her arms. There was complete silence, save for her slow, painful sobbing.

"Well —" began Good hesitatingly. The other man turned sharply at the sound, his face a curious compound of wrath and weariness.

"Right on the job, aren't you?" he said, quietly enough, though his manner was coldly insulting. And when Good made no reply, he added, with a brutal sneer, "You ought to make a hit with

this. Scandal in high life — with all the details. I suppose it'll be what you call a 'scoop,' won't it?"

"You think I'm that sort, do you?"

"Why shouldn't you? It's your business. I suppose you'd like my photograph and a signed statement?"

"Let it go at that," sighed Good. "That's my business. But to-night I'm off duty. I'm one of your fellow guests. I'm playing gentleman. Give me credit for being a good actor. I'll stay in the part."

"Have you anything else to say?" The question was put icily.

"Oh, cut the tragedy," said Good with a wave of his long hand. "I'm told you're a scrapper, my friend. Well, you're not going to show the yellow now, are you? It looks to me as if you had a first-class scrap on your hands now. What are you going to do — snivel — or get sore — or lie down — or . . . what?"

When Baker made no answer, Good rose and stood looking thoughtfully at the pair, almost obliterated in the shadows, only the high-lights showing.

"I guess I'll go now," he said quietly. "This doesn't seem to be my party."

Then he laughed cheerfully. "Lucky my being

here, wasn't it? You were staging great drama when I came in."

He turned from the doorway and looked back. A smile crept over his craggy features, tender, a little wistful. With a shrug he straightened his shoulders, and he was whistling as he walked away, his jerky movements casting grotesque shadows on the grass.

III

Judith did not press her search for Good very rapidly. The night, with the soft and pungent haze of Indian summer filling the air, and the drowsy moon bathing the gardens in argent mystery, cast their spell about her, and she lingered frequently. The crickets chirped like mad, snatches of distant music came faintly to her ears, and the gentle fragrance of the flowers filled her nostrils. It was on such a night, she reflected, that Imrie . . .

She found Good finally, more by accident than design, in a distant corner of the garden. He was hunched forward in his seat, and his head was on his chest. At first she thought him asleep. Then she heard him scratch a match. The momentary glow showed his brows drawn close together. It was a way he had, she knew, when his thoughts were troublesome.

"It's late, Mr. Good," she said.

"Hello," he cried, with a start. Then he recognised her. "Oh — everybody gone?"

"Yes — and sorry to miss you."

"Poppycock," he said succinctly.

"Don't you believe they were?"

His only reply was a short laugh — not pleasant. She changed the subject quickly.

"I never dreamed you could be so entertaining. You were the life of the party."

"A parakeet could do as well," he snapped. "This is a rather old pipe — mind it?"

"Of course not." His abrupt manner, so different from his former amiability, kept her silent. Nor did he make any effort to speak. He managed to make her feel that she was intruding. He seemed to want to be alone. That annoyed her.

"Mr. Good," she said sharply. "Just what is the matter with you?"

He made no attempt to deny or evade. That was not like him. But his reply was a little disconcerting, none the less.

"There's nothing the matter with me," he said slowly. "It's you — and they — and the whole darned system of things."

"I don't understand."

"I didn't think you would," he said ungraciously. "If you did you wouldn't wonder why I was out here with my old pipe."

"Won't you explain it to me then?" she asked gently. She realised that he was greatly perturbed about something. His very ungraciousness — so unlike him — betrayed him.

"I can't explain it. I don't think anybody can."

"Won't you try . . . please?"

He smoked furiously for a moment, without replying. Then, with a sudden gesture, he emptied the ashes, with a sharp knock on his heel.

"Oh, don't bother about me, Miss Wynrod," he said, more softly. "I'm just sore because I . . . oh, I should never have come out to-night."

"But you were so clever — you made such a hit. . . ." She tried hard to follow him, but found it difficult.

"That isn't the point. You see, I didn't fit in. I was an outsider. I thought I was a picture when I left the city in — this." She noticed for the first time that his collar was unbuttoned, and his waistcoat thrown open. "But when I saw myself beside those other fellows . . . And then, the things at table. I was scared to death — all the time. You people can eat with a dozen forks and enjoy it. I can't. I'm not used to it. I . . ."

"But those things aren't important. You've told me so yourself."

"That's just it," he cried hotly. "They're not. But you —"

"I?"

"Oh, I don't mean you, personally — you — your class, your friends — make me feel as if they were important. Why should such little things make such a part of life? You and I are miles apart because of trifles. The big things, the real things, where are they? I'm your inferior because — because — I can't use an oyster fork. And yet I'm your equal in things that matter. I'm beneath — those — emptyheads, your friends. I used words they couldn't understand . . . but I'm 'common.' They made me hate them — those nice people — hate the ground they tread. . . ."

She was amazed at the intensity with which he spoke. She wanted to say something to calm him, but there seemed nothing to say. He sucked moodily for a moment on his empty pipe. Then his voice softened again.

"I oughtn't to talk this way about your friends — but it's hard for me not to be candid . . . with you," he said quietly. "I've said my mind to you so uniformly, you know."

"Please do — always," she said seriously.

"I don't want you to feel that I'm bitter against these people personally — it's all for what they signify. Why should they be handsome and strong and well dressed and — have good manners . . .

and I have none of those things? They've had everything, and I — usually I'm a philosopher . . . funny, isn't it, that a perfectly sound philosophy should get drowned in such a little thing as a finger-bowl."

"Why *should* we have all those things?" she asked thoughtfully, more to herself than to him. He turned around at that, and studied her.

"I've often wondered if you'd ever say that?" he said.

She shrugged her shoulders. "I've said it often — lately."

"And what is the answer?"

"I don't know."

"And that's the right one. Nobody does."

"It *is* unjust and wrong. I can't get away from that. But what to do — I don't know that."

"Go sell what thou hast . . . and come follow me," said Good slowly, as if merely repeating a formula, and not caring whether she heard or not. It struck her as curious that that should have been the text of the first sermon she had ever heard Imrie preach.

"Suppose I did — give up all?" she asked.

He refilled and lighted his pipe before he replied.

"I've never wondered much about the young man who went away sad because he had great posses-

sions," he said gently. "But I've wondered a lot what he did — afterwards. The book doesn't tell us that."

"I don't understand."

"It isn't being rich that counts, Miss Wynrod," he said with a passionate earnestness that she seldom saw in him, "it's what you do with your riches. That's the question you've got to ask yourself."

"Don't most rich people do that?" she asked.

"Some — yes. Most? Umm — I'm inclined to think — not."

"You think even those that do, get the wrong answer, don't you?"

"Mostly — yes."

His assurance vaguely irritated her. She put her question rather sharply.

"Mr. Good, if you were wealthy — oh, very wealthy — what would you do?"

"You think I've never thought of that?" he asked quizzically.

"Have you?"

"Indeed, yes. All my life, I guess. But am I suddenly made rich — or born with it?"

"Suddenly? No. You've had it always — and your father had it before you."

"Then I'd build fine homes and have many servants. I'd have automobiles and yachts and pictures and first editions. I'd contribute to political cam-

paign funds, and give scholarships to my college, and build libraries and hospitals, and install rest rooms and gymnasiums and summer camps in my stores and factories. I'd be generous and upright, and when I died I would be very much respected and not a little loved."

There was an indefinable feeling of banter in his tone, which she found hard to explain. But she went on, hoping that he would explain it himself.

"And if it came to you suddenly?"

"I wouldn't give a cent to charity nor to hospitals nor libraries. And I'd lose all my friends, and probably be shot like a mad dog."

She was stunned with the vehemence of his curious words. But before she could speak he added suddenly, even more fervently.

"I'd live and die hated by those closest to me. But I'd buy the greatest jewel in the world, and I'd leave it to those who wouldn't possibly appreciate it."

"And what is that?" she asked in amazement.

"The truth," he said simply.

For a little while he sat smoking moodily, gazing off into space, busy with his dream. She sensed that she had struck the major chord in his heart, and she was silent too, out of a curious feeling of awe, as if she were in some innermost sanctuary. It was a

moment vibrant with emotion. Then, with a rush, but in a tone that was very firm and business-like, he began to pour out his soul to her.

"What the world needs, Miss Wynrod, is not charity, not the kind of altruism that polishes off effects, but a force that will remove and eliminate causes. Money causes most of the evil in the world. Money can cure it. But it won't do to fill stomachs or even heads. When they die the job has to be done all over again. We've got to sweep the old world off the boards, and build a new one in its place. And the new world must be for *all.* The people must rule and be ruled. There are lots of panaceas on the market. There's the single tax — giving the land back to its owners — the people. That will help. But it's not enough. Then there's Socialism. I worked for a Socialist paper, but I wasn't a Socialist. Socialism isn't enough. It's too narrow, too material, too bigoted. It isn't spiritual enough. It isn't elastic enough. We don't want dogma, we want light. We don't want to stop exploitation. We want to tell the people *how* they're exploited. They'll stop it for themselves, when they know — when they know their own power. They've got to know what is going on in the world. Germs can't live in sunlight and oxygen. And the germs that cause poverty and disease and misery of all kinds can't live in the sunlight and the

oxygen of publicity. Publicity, publicity, what magic would it wreak!" There was almost ecstasy in his voice, in the flicker of his eyes, fixed in space.

"But don't we have publicity — now?" she asked timidly, not wholly grasping the significance of his talk.

"Of a sort, yes," he admitted, "but not the kind I mean. Most of the avenues of publicity are the avenues for special pleaders. The owners of newspapers and magazines have axes to grind, they have policies — some good, some bad — always policies. They present what happens so as to bolster up some preconceived theory. That's not truth — it's propaganda."

"Is the press all dishonest?" she asked in surprise, somewhat tinged with irritation at what seemed like a crude generality.

"Not dishonest, no. The average newspaper would rather be honest than not. And those who wouldn't, find that honesty pays better than dishonesty. But they're honest about things that don't matter and silent about those that do."

"For instance —"

"Well, you remember our first meeting — how I came to interview you about the Algoma mine trouble?"

"I'm not likely to forget it," she said a little sadly.

"Well, what do you know about the situation there?"

"There was a little in the papers a month or so ago."

"And —"

"And?"

"Yes, isn't there something else?"

"Oh, you mean the letters from the directors?"

"Exactly. Your sources of information are first from those interested only in a 'story,' without much regard for getting to the disagreeable bottom, and second from those interested in getting a verdict for their own side."

"Is there any other source?"

"There is. Congress sent a special investigating committee out there —"

"What did it find?"

"The question proves my point. The findings of that committee are buried away in bulky volumes that nobody sees, while the world is fed half on fiction and half on lies."

"Why don't the newspapers tell us what's in those bulky volumes?"

"Because," he said, with ineffable dejection, as if trying to answer a question that he knew he could not answer, "it wouldn't be interesting — and it wouldn't pay."

"Must everything in a newspaper *pay?*" she demanded.

"That's what newspapers are run for," he said sadly. "They've got to pay — pay — always to pay. . . ."

His voice trailed off into a whisper, and he sat silent. She tried to win him back to the theme upon which he had talked so earnestly, and which had stirred her more than she realised. But as if fearful that he had not been understood, he proved obdurate. Finally he rose and held out his hand.

"I must say good night and good-bye, Miss Wynrod. I will not see you in the morning. I must take the early train. It was good of you to ask me out to-night. I'm sorry I couldn't seem more — more — appreciative."

A thought flashed across her mind as they walked slowly back to the house.

"You will come and see me — occasionally?" she asked, as they stood on the terrace.

"Why should you want me to?" he said quizzically, looking at her in a curiously searching way.

"Because — because — well . . ." she floundered, unable to put in words precisely what she felt.

"Because I tell you things?" he put in for her. That clarified her answer.

"No," she said thoughtfully. "Because you say

things I've only thought. You see, I've read more than most people give me credit for," she added somewhat irrelevantly.

He studied her from beneath his heavy eyebrows.

"Keep on, my friend," he said very slowly. "Keep on thinking. And then . . . act. There are great deeds before you — noble, shining deeds . . . if you'll only do them. Yes, some day I shall come again, and we shall talk further upon these matters . . . and then — perhaps — who knows what may come of it?" He finished dreamily.

As he took her hand and held it, she sensed a tender smile upon his lips, and a half uttered question in his eyes. But he said no word. He was almost out of sight in the darkness when a thought flashed across her mind. She called him back.

"Mr. Good . . . why didn't Roger drink anything to-night? Have you any idea?"

"Yes," he said simply. "I told him . . . what it did to me."

CHAPTER V

A SLEEPER WAKES

WITH the first frost Judith closed her house at Braeburn and returned to the city. For a little while she rested quietly, recovering from the strenuous gaieties of the summer. Her friends — particularly the men — smiled when she said that she never had a vacation: but that was literally true. The demands upon her time were far more rigorous than were those of any business man of her acquaintance. In the conventional significance of the word her life was hardly toilsome, but it was none the less most arduously occupied.

There was the management of her huge house — in itself a task of no mean proportions. There were the board meetings of the various civic, religious and charitable organisations, to which she devoted a very conscientious interest. There were the inescapable appointments with her hairdresser, her manicurist, her masseuse, and the small army of personal attendants who joined their efforts in the conservation and embellishment of her body beautiful. There were the " courses " she must take, the books that must be read, and the plays that must be seen.

And finally, as an end or as a cause — she never could determine which — were the luncheons, the receptions, the dinners, the calls, and the balls, which followed one another in never ending course and in never ending monotony.

After a few weeks of what was as near to inaction as she ever attained, Judith plunged anew into the rapid course she had swum since childhood. But for the first time in her life, she was consciously dissatisfied. For the first time she knew, and admitted that she knew, that her multifarious activities were not enough. There was something lacking. It was in such a mood that Imrie found her when he came up to see her one evening. For the first time in the years he had known her, there were little lines of discontent and ennui about her mouth. Her usual vivacity, her cheerful wit, seemed to have vanished, and in their place was a seriousness that was almost sullen, a conversational reserve that was almost hostile.

But he was not wholly sorry that he found her so. He had come on a mission of business, and he was rather glad that her attitude seemed to preclude anything savouring of the personal. He still felt somewhat sensitive at the recollection of the circumstances of their last meeting. He broached his topic quickly.

"I've brought the plans," he said briskly, "and

some sketches. They are wonderful, I think. McKee has spent a lot of time on them. It won't be a Westminster, of course, but there will be nothing in this part of the country to compare with it."

He spread the prints out before her with a curious mixture of pride and enthusiasm and complacency; pride in this long-cherished darling of his heart, a St. Viateur's which should rival the most splendid temples of the old world; enthusiasm for the co-operation accorded by architects and designers; complacency for the magnitude of his own achievement. He was not aggressively self-satisfied: but he was far from insensible to the fact that he was extraordinarily young to be the rector of as rich and powerful a congregation as that of St. Viateur's. And a chance remark, overheard one day in the University Club, spoken by his bishop to one of his vestrymen, sounded not unreasonably in his ears — "He will go far — young Imrie."

But he was disappointed at Judith's reception. She fingered the drawings listlessly, and admired them without enthusiasm. His own eagerness cooled before her unexpressed indifference. He had come fired with his dream. Before her it paled and died to grey ashes. Its beauty faded, leaving only a question and dull pain. It was very dear to him. It represented achievement, success, glory — and all three won in the service of man and to the greater

honour and glory of God: but Judith was dearer still. For her not to rejoice with him was to take all joy out of it. He sat wounded and silent, unable to go on, almost not caring.

"It will cost . . . a great deal . . ." she said, more meditatively than interrogatively. He nodded, wondering at her tone.

"Do you think it's the best way to spend that much money?" she shot at him suddenly, her brows knitted. It surprised him, but he answered promptly:

"I know of none better."

She stared at him and through him for a moment. Then her mood seemed to change. She laughed metallically, and reaching lazily toward a silver box at her elbow, selected a cigarette and lighted it. It was a deliberate thrust. Always hitherto she had refrained from such indulgence before him.

"Come, Arnold," she said cruelly. "You don't honestly believe that, do you?"

The insolence of her pose, one knee over the other, the cigarette in her hand, the challenging note in her voice, hurt him more than her previous indifference.

"I don't think I can discuss that," he said, rather loftily.

Her smile faded. "Well, you ought to discuss

it. You've got to defend it. You've got to prove it. Don't be absurd, Arnold."

He was dumfounded. It was so unlike her. He had never seen her in such a mood. But he ascribed it to the incomprehensible nature of womankind. He knew from the fiction he had read that women do very irrational things, frequently, if not as a general rule, saying the precise opposite of their meaning. He tried to change the subject. But to his surprise she refused to change with him.

"Don't people make you defend your position?" she persisted.

"No one has."

She was silent momentarily. Then she returned to the attack, almost doggedly.

"Well, then, let me be the first. This church will cost . . ."

"Six hundred and seventy-five thousand dollars," he supplied coldly. He regretted that circumstances had forced him into what was beyond dispute a refined form of beggary. But he had realised from the start that success of this sort was quite essential to eminence in the clergy, and he had resolutely fought down his distaste. But it angered him to be so brutally reminded of his status, particularly by a creature whom he sedulously deified. She seemed deliberately intent upon leaving the pedestal he had constructed for her.

Again she was silent, surveying him with a smile that he thought was unpleasantly cynical. It seemed also that there was a noticeable admixture of contempt for him. His anger gave way to pain. He racked his brain for an explanation of her attitude.

"That's a great deal of money," she said unpleasantly. "And with it you're going to build a marble palace on our finest street. Do you know what I think, Arnold?" she added, not unkindly. "I think you've gotten art and religion mixed."

He shrugged his shoulders at that, not knowing how to reply, and she went on, her tone changing imperceptibly, as she spoke, from a scarcely concealed bitterness, to one that was almost argumentative.

"In theory, of course, the Church is for the lame and the halt and blind, the poor and the sick and the friendless, isn't it?"

He nodded, feeling curiously uncomfortable. He did not like to have his mission in life subjected to such matter-of-fact analysis, and besides, it filled him with a vague interrogation.

"Well, what will this wonderful church do for the poor and the . . ."

"We are to have a gymnasium and a library and . . ."

"What nonsense," she snapped. "You're go-

ing to have them all miles from the nearest poor. That's an absurd answer."

"Judith, what *is* the matter?" he pleaded. "You were never like this before."

She ignored the question.

"Why aren't you honest?" she countered. "Why don't you admit that it's all for the Wynrods, and the Wolcotts and the Warings and the . . . why don't you admit that it's just a monument to pride, pure and simple?"

He was aghast. Also he was offended, to the depths of his soul. She had trampled deliberately on what was dear to him, and subtly, but no less certainly, she had made an implication which roused in him all the resentment of which he was capable. But the very thought of resentment brought with it the recollection of all his professional training. Arnold Imrie was perilously close to a very human display of temper, but the Reverend Arnold saved him.

"For some reason," he said slowly, in a manner that to her savoured of the pulpit, "you seem unwilling to discuss this matter reasonably. I don't think you are fair to it — or to me — which is unlike you. Some other time, when you are in a different mood, we will perhaps talk about it again." He rolled up his plans and rose. "I will bid you good evening, Judith."

"Very properly rebuked," laughed Judith in-

solently. "I admire your self control. But you're so proper, Arnold. If you were only a little more . . . oh, well — but I haven't been condemning *you* — entirely. It's what you stand for. It isn't that you're a snob — but you're being — doing — oh, I'd like to put things as clearly as you can. I'd make you understand me, if I only knew how to. But I . . ."

"I think I understand very well," he interrupted sharply. A thought, a half-formulated suspicion, had flitted across his mind.

"No, you don't. You think I'm poking fun at you — just to be nasty. It isn't that. I'm serious — really. Only somehow — you don't impress me as much as you used to. You — your ideas — what you stand for — oh, they don't seem to very much matter. Your kind of religion seems to me — I've thought it more and more — it seems to me a sort of hobby. It's just for Sundays."

He stared at her aghast, seeming to waver between grief and righteous anger. But he said nothing. She went on coolly.

"I guess the trouble with you, Arnold, is that you're too much of a clergyman — not enough of an ordinary sinful man."

He wavered no longer. His suspicion crystallised into certainty. His words came through his teeth as if shot from a cannon. The Reverend Arnold

Imrie, for the first time in years, lost his temper, and lost it with a completeness and animation that was magnificent. He turned suddenly and glared at Judith, his face pale. Then he shot a trembling finger at her.

"So," he snapped. "Six weeks of this — this — anarchist — can shatter the faith of a lifetime. Such a faith. A Wynrod, too. . . . It is — I dare not say what it is."

But he did dare. He launched into a passionate diatribe, which to Judith, listening patiently, sounded very much like a funeral oration over the body of a notorious scoundrel, so compounded it was of scorn and pity and utter certainty of ultimate damnation and complacent self-satisfaction that he was not as such. It was accompanied by familiar pulpit gesticulations, used so long that they had become unconscious. As he talked he paced back and forth, pausing now and again to emphasise a point with a resounding thump on his hand. It was excellent — oratory. But all through she had the feeling that it was only a sermon, that the recital of her iniquities, so vividly phrased, was only academic. And as he made his peroration, more from a lack of breath than a lack of ideas, she laughed — mirthfully, unrestrainedly.

He stopped as if shot. He stared at her as if he could not believe his ears.

"Very wonderful, Arnold," said Judith lazily, "but very absurd."

Flouted to the depths of his soul, Imrie gathered up his papers anew. It was as if a priest, praying passionately to his idols, had suddenly raised his eyes to find them with their thumbs to their noses. It was a ghastly dream. He was like a ship that has dragged its anchor. He was drifting in uncharted waters. The most dependable of his flock, the dearest of his friends, the star of the best that was in him, had deliberately, thoroughly, and without any effort at concealment, held up all that he held sacred, to ridicule. His chagrin showed in his face, and Judith was a little appalled by what she had done. But she would not have recalled a word or a glance. She was sorry to see his pain, but for all its harshness, she felt that he would emerge better for the treatment. The mind needs an occasional physic, no less than the body. She had rocked the ponderous bulk of the Reverend Arnold Imrie on its foundations. If it settled back into its original place, none the worse for the rocking, so much the better for the foundations. If it did not, . . . well, the new position could not be less satisfying than the old. And there was a possibility that it might be better.

She smiled back at his frigid bow with the feeling of a mother who has spanked an obstreperous child.

"For the good of your soul, Arnold," she whispered under her breath, "and the greater honour and glory of God."

For a long time after Imrie had left, she pondered, trying to put in a phrase the exact idea she had meant to give him. Finally it came to her, in a single word — honesty. And then, as an inevitable corollary, came the thought of the man who exemplified honesty as did no one else she knew. She thought of that deprecating little lift of his hands — so characteristic, so significant. With a smile that was not without tears, she picked up a book and made an effort to read.

The next day was Sunday. As she dressed she tried to decide whether she would go to church or not, and concluded that she would not. There were a number of books, she thought rebelliously, which would prove more profitable than Arnold's sermon. So, after breakfast, she made herself comfortable by the window in the library, and began one — one of the many, incidentally, which Good had sent to her. She saw him infrequently, but his books came constantly, and she often wondered if he appreciated the subtle compliment he paid her with each one of what she knew must be a slender treasure. They came spasmodically, as if he rushed them to her when some fancy was hot in his mind. There would be a poem, with characteristic comment all around

the margins of the page, and an injunction on the fly leaf to "skip the rest"; or a ponderous volume of economics, with the information that it was poppycock, save for a paragraph on page 266. Sometimes it would be only a pencilled scrap of paper, with an amusing anecdote thereon, or just an illuminating epigram. He seemed to wish to share with her the pleasures of his mind. No one had ever shown that wish to her before.

The volume in her hand had come from him only a day or two before. It was thick and heavy and very austerely bound. It surprised her to see that it was new. He seldom sent her new books. She glanced idly through the pages before she happened to note the title. Then her whole manner changed. It was as if someone had spoken to her sharply. The words burned themselves into her consciousness. The small gilt letters shouted like live things. "Proceedings of the Congressional Committee of Inquiry into the Conditions Obtaining in the Algoma Mine Fields."

As she went on from the title to the contents, her indolent apathy changed rapidly to intent immersion. Occasionally her fingers clinched involuntarily and her eyebrows knitted. Once she even dropped the book and covered her eyes with her hands. It was a terrible narrative which unfolded itself before her, made more terrible by the emotionless dispassion of

the telling. It was a story of bribery and corruption, of murder begetting murder, with the stupid folly of more murder as its cure, of the weakest and most helpless paying the price, of race hatred, of greed,— the whole nauseous catalogue of human frailties was laid before her, with less feeling than the Homeric catalogue of ships.

As her imagination took fire, it seemed to her that the poison of selfishness, festering in a far-away hole in the ground, had oozed out and over the land, marking its slimy trail in legislatures, in churches, in the homes of the highest, until, finally, it had reached her own library. She grew sick and faint as the pestilential tale expanded, and horror was piled upon horror.

The indictment made one thing clear. Algoma was not a mere morbid growth, to be extirpated by force, but an evidence of disease: and a disease, not of individuals or of classes, but of a civilisation. The roots of that disease were not, as a circular from a mine manager had said, in the " tyrannous labour unions." They went far deeper than that. They were in her own heart and brain. They were in the hearts and brains of every man and woman in the world.

It was the explanation of the mine owners, she knew, that they fought for " the right of the American workman to work for whom, what and when

he pleased." It was the defence of the miners that they fought for the power of organisation.

Both quarrels were just, she felt with a terrible sense of hopelessness: both demanded the right to rule. Both would fight to the death for that right. It was folly to hope for an equal division of power. The line was too fine, too fluctuating. One or the other must lose. Talk of concessions, of improvement of conditions, only obscured the issue. She put herself momentarily in the place of the employers, the men of her class, the men she knew: and her jaw hardened. Freedom was the essence of American life. She would never permit those who took her bread to dictate what and how she should give it. She would fight to the end for her freedom.

Then, resolutely, she put herself in the place of those who demanded that she yield that freedom. Unconsciously her fingers clenched. She saw quite clearly that " freedom " took on a different meaning then. It became " tyranny." These creatures who came up out of the earth to burn and destroy, who flouted law and the rights of property, were but fragments of mankind's never-ending fight for liberty. Though, in their groping progress toward the goal, they wallowed in blood and folly, destroying the

good with the bad, murdering the saints with the sinners, none the less were they a part of the blundering march of democracy.

Algoma was but an outpost of a struggle that was universal. The crust of convention and pretence had burst through momentarily, and the seething cauldron, full of the molten future, was exposed to frightened eyes.

As the hours passed, a new point of view took form in Judith's mind, and things which had always been quite clear now seemed not clear at all. She had never been more thoroughly muddled in her life, but she realised with a sense of satisfaction that the very confusion of her mind indicated the wiping away of those specious answers to all questions which had been an absolute preventive against any real speculation. Her slate was blank. There was room for new writing.

But over and over again recurred the question, "Why don't people think about these things?" She wanted to rush out and wipe the slates of her friends clear of their comfortable sophistries. She wanted to make them understand that because a man preached change he was not as dangerous as the man who preached inaction when there was a volcano under their feet. Why must they always destroy their Cassandras?

She was at a pitch of exaltation which she had seldom attained before when John Baker, the most phlegmatic person she knew, was announced.

He greeted her seriously, as he greeted everyone, and accomplished the conversational preliminaries in the fewest possible words. Then he made clear the purpose of his visit.

"I have bad news for you," he said calmly.

"Yes?" Judith's manner was as placid as his own, though a thousand questions flashed across her mind.

He cleared his throat. "It is a fact that even the shrewdest men make bad investments — indefensible investments," he said profoundly, as if the discovery were his own.

"Oh. . . ." Her fears vanished. He was the harbinger only of financial trouble.

"Your father," he went on without haste, "was an extraordinarily shrewd man. But even he . . ."

" . . . made bad investments?"

"Exactly."

"Well . . . tell me the worst — I am brave," she laughed.

"For some reason, impossible to explain, he became possessed of a majority of the bonds of *The Dispatch.* It is a curious thing. He must have known that a newspaper presents the worst possible

field for inactive investment. No property changes more rapidly in transition from a going condition to a forced sale."

"What about the bonds?"

"That is my bad news. *The Dispatch* has not been financially successful for years. The present owners have resolved to give up the losing struggle."

"I see. But where does that affect me?"

"You hold their bonds. They intend to default on the payment of further interest — and, of course, principal as well."

"Oh. . . ." Judith felt that she should evidence dismay at least sufficient to match Baker's gravity. But there were too many unpleasant things in the world for her to furrow her brow over the loss of a few thousands from her annual income. An admission of that, she knew, however, would shock him: so she contented herself with a noncommittal monosyllable.

"You will lose heavily," he continued. "The bonds constitute a first lien on the property, to be sure, but most of the property consists of good-will, which is not very good, so I'm told. Really all you can hope for is the proceeds from the sale of the machinery and furniture. They'll sell for only a fraction of their value, too. Really, it's quite too bad." The genuine regret in his voice almost made

her smile. It was so incongruous that he, who lost nothing, should be so much more affected than she, who lost everything.

"What will become of the paper?" she asked.

"Following foreclosure proceedings a receiver will be appointed, and in the course of time it will be sold at auction — that is, a sale will be held."

"But you don't think anyone will buy it?"

"It is hardly likely."

"Then the paper will be on my hands?"

"Yes — on yours and on those of the other bondholders," he admitted regretfully.

"A nice white elephant!" she cried.

His face brightened ever so slightly. "There's just a bare possibility that we can sell it. Even if we got only a fraction of its worth it would be better than nothing at all."

"Of course," she agreed. Her manner seemed to indicate that her thoughts were far away.

"There is a group of men," he continued, "wealthy men, who have talked more or less seriously of purchasing a newspaper that would give voice to the conservative element. They feel that they would be doing a public service in offsetting the demagoguery and sensationalism of most of the popular press. I don't know how serious they are, or how much they are prepared to spend. It's just a possibility. Still . . ."

"Who are these men?" asked Judith sharply.

"Well, there's Parker Ralston, and Anderson LeGore, and Henry Waring and . . ."

"I see." There was a curious note in Judith's voice which Baker was unable to explain, and she seemed to stare at something beyond and behind him. The suggestion of someone else in the room was so strong that he turned around. But all he saw was a pile of books on a chair. They were too far away for him to note that one of them was severely labelled "Proceedings of the Congressional Committee of Inquiry into the Conditions Obtaining in the Algoma Mine Fields."

"If I was unwilling to sell out to those men," she said suddenly, "what then?"

"You couldn't refuse. The sale would be held by the receiver, for the benefit of the other bondholders as well as yourself. Besides, why should you refuse even two cents on the dollar, when refusal would mean nothing?"

She ignored his question. "Suppose I wanted to get possession of the paper myself?"

"What in the world would you want it for?"

"Well, just for fun, let's suppose I did want it. How could I get it?"

"You could purchase the other bonds, and at the termination of the receivership the paper would revert to you, unless you chose to sell."

"How long would that take?"

"About eighteen months."

"And if I wanted it immediately?"

"What are you talking about, my dear child?"

"Never mind that," she cried impatiently, "we're just supposing, you know. The point is, how could I get it right away?"

"Well, you might purchase the paper from the present owners for a nominal sum — merely assume their obligations. That would mean that if you wanted to keep it you'd have to meet the interest on the bonds and ultimately, the principal too."

She was thoughtful for a moment, her chin on her hand. Then her question came sharply. "What would that cost?"

"The bonds?"

"No, immediate possession."

"That depends. It's hard to say, offhand."

"Well, approximately?"

"Oh, comparatively little. Just a nominal sum. It's really nothing more than a consideration to make the transaction legal. The expense wouldn't come until later. But why, my dear girl . . ."

"This is all just supposing, you know," she interrupted with a smile.

"Very well, just supposing — but why should you even suppose such a plan? Why should you want

to take over a proposition which has been demonstrably unprofitable, even in skilled hands?"

"How about Mr. Waring, and this man Ralston, and Anderson LeGore?"

"But they're very wealthy."

"Yes, but so am I wealthy," she said ingenuously.

He was momentarily nonplussed. "But they would manage it for a purpose, rather than for profit," he cried.

"Well, suppose I wanted to manage it for a purpose rather than for profit?"

Baker rose and put his hand on her shoulder, as a suspicion took form in his mind. "Judith — you're not . . . serious?"

She tossed her head and smiled enigmatically. "And if I were?"

He had no reply ready for that elfish question, so obviously, it seemed to him, designed for the purpose of arousing him to argument. And when he was silent, that guess seemed to be confirmed, for Judith's momentary animation faded. She put her question quite indifferently.

"I suppose there's nothing for me to do, is there?"

"Oh, no. I just dropped in to prepare you for anything you might read and wonder about. Things will take their course. Just don't worry."

Judith concealed a smile as she assured him that she would not. "When will they officially default?" she asked.

"Oh, in a week or two."

"Well, let's hope for the best."

"Yes, I have great hopes of this Waring-LeGore-Ralston combination. It is quite possible that something may come of it. But don't be too sanguine," he added, as if fearful that he had raised her hopes unduly.

Judith wandered about restlessly after he left her. John Baker would have been shocked indeed had he known the thoughts coursing in her brain. But she was not permitted even to muse for very long.

In a few moments Roger came in, looking very tired and depressed. But at her solicitous inquiries he was noncommittal. He picked up a newspaper and read for a moment, listlessly. Then he threw it down.

"Where were you last night?" she inquired, with a suspicion born of long experience.

"Molly's," he replied shortly.

"That all?"

"Yes."

"Why so solemn, then?"

He lit a cigarette and flicked the match deftly into the fireplace. "Oh, we had it out, and she — said things."

"What things?"

"The same line you get off. About my not doing anything — and all that."

"About not working, you mean?"

"Yes."

"Well — you have been a little slow at getting started, haven't you?"

He fired up hotly at that.

"And what if I have? It hasn't been for lack of trying, let me tell you. I've been doing my best to get a job ever since I said I would."

"And you can't get one?" Judith smiled incredulously.

"No. Oh, of course there's plenty of chance to invest some money and be treasurer and all that, but I mean a regular job. I've tried everywhere." He hung his head dejectedly.

"What seems to be the trouble?"

"Those who know me know me too well. And those who don't know me — don't know me," he answered cryptically. "And I don't know anything, myself."

"I'm so sorry," she said helplessly.

"How do you suppose." He switched the topic suddenly. "How do you suppose a chap without any pull or any friends — a fellow like Good, for instance — gets jobs?"

Before the echo of Roger's words had died from

the air, a maid stood in the doorway, announcing the presence of Good himself.

"Why not ask him?" said Judith obviously. And when the tall man came in, still dressed in his familiarly shabby brown suit, Roger put the question.

"How did I get my first job," he repeated slowly, with a twinkle in his eye. "Well — I asked for one — and I kept on asking for one until I got it."

"But that's just what I've done," protested Roger.

"Perhaps you're more particular than I was."

"I'm not a bit particular," cried the younger man earnestly. "I'd do anything. I've gotten over being particular."

"No, my boy, you haven't," smiled Good. Then a faint shadow crossed his face, and he added softly, "You've never been hungry."

Judith hoped that he would amplify the intimation. But as so often happened, he began a theme only to dismiss it. His tone changed and he turned briskly to her.

"Well, Miss Wynrod, why don't you do something to help the lad?"

"Me?" she echoed in surprise. "What can I do?"

"Would you be willing to spend some money — quite a large sum, too, as such things go? Not very large for you, though," he added with the reflective

candour that never failed to astonish and delight her. "Would you invest something — to see him well started in an enterprise of the utmost — value?"

Roger's curiosity was plain on his face. But Good seemed only to watch Judith narrowly. She looked wonderingly up at him, as he stood, half-smiling, before her.

"Have you a definite opening?"

"Perhaps," he said quizzically.

"On what does it depend?" she asked, fencing with him.

"On you!"

"Oh, please don't be absurd," she cried, as her interest got the better of her. "Do tell me what this is all about."

"And where do I figure?" asked Roger, with a touch of annoyance in his voice. "As far as I can see you're talking to Judith. Where do I get off?"

"It concerns her as much as it does you," said Good shortly, his smile fading and the vertical lines deepening between his eyes, a plain sign to Judith that he was far from badinage. "In fact," he added seriously, "I think it concerns her even more."

"Then perhaps my absence would be preferable to my company?" demanded Roger with considerable asperity. Good's reply surprised both him and his sister.

"Yes," he said, "I think it would. If you'll leave

us for a bit, I'll tell your sister what's on my mind. Then, if she likes, she can tell you."

Roger jumped to his feet. "Well," he cried, "it strikes me that you're disposing of me pretty easily. I'm of age, you know."

"If you say much more," said Good mildly, "I'll be tempted to clear out and try an interview with your sister some other time. Now — if you please."

As soon as the sound of Roger's grumbling had died away, Good burst abruptly into speech.

"Miss Wynrod," he said curtly, "before I put my proposition to you, I want to know whether you are prepared to spend some money for that boy's future — not to speak of your own?"

"How much money?" she asked, principally to regain the poise that his inexplicable earnestness had driven from her.

"A good deal."

She smiled faintly. Would she spend "a good deal" for Roger? The thought almost made her laugh aloud. But she controlled herself, and her reply was almost indifferent in tone.

"Yes — if I thought the plan promised well."

"I knew it, of course," cried Good. Then he drew his chair closer to hers, and emphasising his points with his long forefinger against the palm of his hand, began.

"To begin with, Miss Wynrod, you know how I

feel toward the press. We've talked it over often. You know I believe that to turn this old world over and set it on its feet where it belongs, all clean and sound and sweet, the first thing we've got to have is truth — truth, truth, always truth and more truth — nothing whatever but truth, nothing evaded or concealed. In a word, we've got to have a free and a candid press. You understand all that, don't you?"

His eyes clouded and a look of anxiety came into them. But it was dispelled at her answer.

"I'm not deaf, Mr. Good."

"Well . . ." He stopped and scratched his head as if something eluded him. "I'm so full of it all — all the time — that I don't know where to begin. It's my great dream. Every dreamer has one particular dream. This is mine. I've been on the hunt for my chance. Now when it seems to be here I don't know how to seize it. I'm afraid of saying the wrong thing and spoiling it all. For years I've been looking for a millionaire — some one to endow my dream. You're the one I've picked. You understand, I think. I don't seem so crazy to you. And you've got the stuff in you to stand the gaff when things go hard. It's not so hard to get money, but sympathy . . . faith . . . people stop when the light goes out. You're different. You'd go on. You . . . do you follow me?"

He stopped and surveyed her anxiously. The deep creases over his nose, his short sentences, the sharp nervous movements of his hands, all betrayed the stress under which he spoke. It would disappoint him, perhaps stop him altogether, if she said that she did not follow. But as she assured him that she did, she wondered how much of his meaning she really missed. Nevertheless her manner seemed to satisfy him.

"If I went to you and asked for money to build a hospital or a school, or a church —"

She looked up sharply at that. But it was plain that there was no covert meaning in his words. He went on intently.

"You'd think that understandable enough. You'd probably hand it over. But, Miss Wynrod, I want your money for something of greater value to society than all the churches and hospitals put together. I want you to put your money to work clearing up this muddled old world of ours by bringing sunshine and oxygen and hope and understanding into men's minds. I want you — how can I possibly make clear to you how much I want it — I want you to — to — buy . . . a *newspaper!*"

He stopped and waited for her to speak. But she could only echo the word stupidly. Then she managed to convey to him that she wanted him to go on. He did, but his voice seemed to have lost some-

thing of its intensity, and his words came with more confidence.

"Yes. I've told you so indirectly many times. But I never made it personal, partly because I hated to put my hopes to the test, partly because there seemed no opening. Now I have the opening. The divinity that shapes our ends is doing its best for me, it seems. I learned yesterday that *The Dispatch* would sell out at a ridiculous figure. That made me screw my courage up to the testing point. I came up this morning to tell you about it. Then your brother — why, it couldn't have worked out better for me! The opportunity his future offers as a lever to move you . . . well, Miss Wynrod, what do you think?"

She laughed unaffectedly at that.

"What do I think? Heavens. How *can* I think. You fire an entirely novel idea at me and expect me to answer at once. You've stunned me."

"But it's not new," cried Good. "We've talked the idea of this over a hundred times."

"The oldest thing in the world is new when it's applied to one's self for the first time," said Judith sententiously.

"Still, it isn't really new, is it?" he persisted.

"Well — not entirely," she admitted.

"Of course not. It's Roger's part in it that's new. That bewilders you, of course."

"What *is* his part?" she interrupted.

"Running a newspaper is exactly like running any other kind of a business — only harder. He'd be the manager — with assistance of course — with a chance to make all out of himself that he can. He'd be your representative."

"I see," she said thoughtfully. "That seems to dispose of him. Now where does Brent Good fit into the scheme of things?"

"Wherever he fits. Give him $15 a week and he'd fit anywhere. That would be enough of a raise over his present honorarium to justify him in changing."

"You're joking," she cried.

"About the salary? Not a bit. It's enough. Besides, it leaves room for promotion. As a matter of fact I've been told by potential employers that it was too much."

Good was silent then, and Judith also, each waiting for the other to speak. But it happened that the silence was finally broken by Roger, whose impatience had become too much to bear any longer.

"Well," he said from the doorway, with a most elaborate attempt at casuality. "Is the great mystery about to be revealed?"

Good looked inquiringly at Judith, and she motioned to Roger.

"Sit down, Roger," she said quietly. "Mr.

Good has a plan to offer." Then she hesitated momentarily. "If the idea appeals to you — I am prepared to back you."

Good turned a startled but grateful gaze upon her. But she affected not to see him. He turned quickly to Roger. Eloquently and passionately he described the opportunity he offered. Judith, entranced in spite of herself, followed him intently, while Roger, from derision, went successively into interest, to close attention, and finally to unbounded enthusiasm. Judith divined the subtle flattery with which Good concealed his profounder motives: to the young man he was only opening up an alluring vista of personal glory.

"Well, Roger," said Good finally, "what's your verdict?"

Roger turned to his sister, his eyes shining. "It's great!" he whispered. "Will you go through with it, sis?"

Judith heard him only vaguely. Her thoughts, strangely enough, were with Imrie and his church. But she nodded affirmatively. She seemed only to be granting another of the endless string of permissions that had marked her maternal care of him through the years. And the way in which he ran to her and threw his arms about her and hugged her, was very familiar. His part in it all seemed curiously unreal. But Good's calm voice brought home

to her the magnitude of the step upon which she was so blithely deciding.

"One thing, Miss Wynrod. *The Dispatch* can be bought for very little. But the kind of paper you are going to make out of it won't make much money — not for a while. It may cost — quite a little. Do you understand?" he added sharply, his eyes seeming to speak to her alone.

She caught their message. "Yes," she said calmly; "I understand perfectly."

Good rose, and pulled a pair of well-worn gloves from his pocket.

"You'll have to act quickly."

"Why?"

"There's a syndicate of reactionaries ready to take it, I'm told. Talk it over, you two — discuss the bad parts mostly. I'll call you up in the morning. Then, if you want to go through it, get your lawyer and we'll settle it up. Good-bye."

"Oh, wait," cried Roger. "There's a million questions I want to ask you."

"No. You two talk it over. I'm out of it — till to-morrow." And with that he seized his hat, and in a moment was striding down the avenue. Judith watched him from the window until he was out of sight. Then she turned to Roger.

"Does it really appeal to you, lad?" she asked wistfully.

"It certainly does," he cried with enthusiasm. "And besides I don't see how I'll ever get into business unless I buy my way in. This is a chance in a million. There's money in newspapers. Look at *The Press*. Why, you couldn't buy its stock — not at any price."

Tears forced themselves into Judith's eyes. She wondered if she ought to let Roger deceive himself. She knew all too clearly that Good's ambitions lay not along the route of money. She wondered fearfully if he could transform Roger's ideals from the conventional worship of profit-taking to something less substantial and less understood. But as she thought what he had already accomplished with the boy, her fears vanished, giving place to a feeling of awe. What was the secret of this man's fascination, that he could force her to yield implicit faith to his lightest word? What caused him to be able, not merely to convert her to the most amazing ideas, but actually to make her join him in the propaganda? She had a premonition of what John Baker would say when she told him her decision. Then the recollection of the salary which Good had proposed for himself came to her, and she smiled.

All that day and until far into the night, she and Roger discussed the great idea. Or rather, Roger talked and planned and dreamed, and she listened. And as she listened to his enthusiasm, the first of

his life over anything really worth while, her resolution crystallised. If she could give money toward the building of a church in which her interest was undeniably decreasing, she could give money toward the building of her brother into manhood. And she was far from overlooking the opportunity for herself. She had never heard of a woman going into the publishing of newspapers, but Good's enthusiasm for the high ends to be attained had fired her more than she realised, and as the hours passed, she flamed higher with real enthusiasm for what had, at first thought, seemed the wildest of wild projects. Before she retired, her mind was quite made up. She, idler and parasite, would play a part in the world of affairs.

The next morning, calm but determined, and speaking her thoughts in few words, she was in John Baker's office. Briefly and clearly, she made known to him the resolution she had taken. His jaw dropped as he listened, and his usual immobility of countenance quite deserted him. He tried to smile.

"So you want to buy it, eh?" To conceal his amazement, he walked to the window. "Why don't you throw your money out here?" he asked. "You can lose it that way with less trouble."

Judith had no answering smile. Her eyes narrowed and her lips formed a little straighter line.

"Will you draw up the papers for me, John? I've phoned Mr. Good, and he will be here any minute."

"Mr. Good, eh? You have a good deal of faith in him, haven't you? So he's the nigger in the pile, is he?"

"Have *you* any reason not to have faith in him?" Baker was silent, and a curious expression, which she could not fathom, formed on his face.

"No," he murmured finally, with what seemed like an effort, "I have not."

"Personally I have the utmost confidence in him," said Judith with a shortness which brooked no further discussion of the topic. Baker looked at her thoughtfully for a moment. Then he pressed a button on his desk.

"It's your funeral, Judith. I never thought you were a fool . . ."

"Before?" she interrupted, with her first smile.

It was significant that he made no reply.

In due course Good arrived, accompanied by another lawyer, a tall, thin man, with a prodigious moustache, who said absolutely nothing that was intelligible to her. While he and Baker were conferring, Good drew her into an ante-room and closed the door.

He was greatly agitated, and the perspiration kept coming out on his forehead in spite of his constant

efforts to wipe it away. He presented a curious contrast to her perfect calm.

"Miss Wynrod — before we go into this thing — you must know what it means — absolutely. I mustn't hide anything."

"Don't I know all?" She lifted her eyebrows. She smiled inwardly as she thought how much more she knew about it than Good did.

He paced nervously in front of her. "I hope so. I don't know. But you must."

"What is lacking?"

"It's going to cost — more than the purchase price —"

"I know that."

"It's going to cost more than you guess — incalculably more."

"I don't understand."

"I know — but you must. We're going to dedicate this paper to one thing — the truth. Sometimes the truth isn't easy to tell. The telling of it may bring you — it may — oh, don't you see — those closest to you — dearest to you — they may be the least able to stand the truth. You don't know what it means. You can't. Are you ready to forsake — all? . . . I mean that literally, Miss Wynrod." She had never seen him so utterly excited, so moved to the depths. "Are you ready to give up everything that has been dear to you in the days that

are gone, for this crazy ideal? For if you are not," he finished with a solemnity that brought a queer lump to her throat, "I had much rather that you stopped before you began."

She rose and faced him, and her eyes looked steadily into his. They gleamed dull grey, like the hulls of battleships on the fighting line, and her chin was grimly firm. The stock from which she sprang had been a pioneering stock, and none who bore the name of Wynrod, in days when life was simple but hard, had turned back when once their hands were on the plough. Their sturdy courage was in her blood, and the echo of that Hugh Wynrod who had defied his King and left all that life had held dear for him, to seek a new life in a new world, for the sake of an ideal, sounded in her vibrant voice.

"I understand, Mr. Good. I am ready — for anything."

"It means — fight — always," he said softly.

"I have played always. I *want* — fight."

"Then shake," he cried. "We'll go through — to the end!"

"To the end," she echoed, as she seized his outstretched hand. Then the tension snapped suddenly.

"How absurd," she laughed. "We're behaving like pirates in a melodrama. Let's go in the other room and be rational people."

But Good did not even attempt to smile.

CHAPTER VI

DEAD IDOLS

ARNOLD IMRIE was of clear Scotch descent. And among his forebears had been those grim Covenanters to whom compromise was anathema. He had a strong body and a strong intellect, but stronger than both combined was the resistless overlord he called his conscience. Sydney Smith's aspersions upon the impenetrability of the Scotch skull are well known, though their justice may be questioned. But it is indisputable that nothing short of the heroic measures he recommended would suffice to separate Imrie from a resolve, once firmly made. Being human, he saw many things dimly, and some quite falsely. But as he saw he lived, and there was no power in the earth or out of it to make him evade or equivocate. Sometimes this sturdy candour made him noble: sometimes it made him tiresome: and once in a way it merely made him ridiculous. But though for long periods it might remain dormant, it was none the less the prime impetus in his life.

Judith's derision, her more or less obvious contempt, had wounded him more than he would have believed possible; and her touch, though light, had

found spots that were sorer than he had suspected. Her calm disdain was like an acid, dissolving away the crust of unimportant occupation and meticulous conformity which had protected his ideals from the corruptive action of reality. He shivered, figuratively, at the revelation.

One of her mordant phrases was poignantly clear. Again and again it recurred to him, always with a question attached. He tried to dismiss it, and could not. She had called him "too much of a clergyman — not enough of a man." As he walked home, he analysed its meaning, and tried to disguise it in sophistries. But the intellectual honesty which was his at base, forbade. The meaning was far too manifest. And at intervals through the week, he strove to force his thoughts into an effective answer. But always there was failure at the end.

Of course such charges as she had made to him were not new. The literature of the day was full of them. But hitherto he had been able to keep his defences intact. When his own logic failed him, there was always the logic of his schooling and of his contemporaries upon which to fall back. But for such heresies to spring from Judith — that was treachery within the gates. He resented it bitterly, and he was appalled as the weapons so strong in the past now crumpled in his hands.

A whisper grew louder and louder in his soul, a

question sounded more and more relentlessly. And when it would brook no more delay, reluctantly, sick at heart, and filled with fear at the outcome, he hauled down his flag of truce and gave the devil battle.

It was well after midnight of Saturday when the last gun was fired, and the struggle was over. With lips compressed, and brow furrowed, and with his tongue parched by the pipes he had smoked, Imrie capitulated.

On the morrow he would put his life to the test.

But when he stood in the pulpit and faced his congregation, awaiting him with courteous expectancy, as it had waited so often, his heart well-nigh failed him. Slowly he let his eyes rove over the throng, brilliant in costume, exuding the indefinable aroma of power and luxury. These men and women of St. Viateur's were the cream of the community. It was no small thing to be the shepherd of such a flock. The silence grew oppressive, while he hesitated. He seemed to look for someone. Finally he found what he sought. His face hardened and his teeth clicked so sharply that those in the pews near at hand could almost hear the sound. Judith was in a seat well back in the church. Good was beside her. Imrie's task had suddenly become far harder, yet even more imperative. He hesitated no longer.

He cleared his throat and his eyes wandered,

raptly, as of old, into the dim vastness of the rafters. "*Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword,*" he said impressively. "Text taken from the Gospel according to St. Matthew, tenth chapter, thirty-fourth verse."

He paused at that point, as he had paused Sundays without end, and the congregation, as if at a signal, seemed to settle back and make itself resignedly comfortable against the duty it faced. There was a subdued but general coughing, and the whispering rustle of silks: then a calm hush.

But the preacher had not uttered a dozen words before the expectant quiet changed sensibly. It was not his words which caused the change, but his tone. And it was not that his tone was dramatic, but that it was not. The very fact that he spoke with a complete freedom from anything histrionic presented a contrast which amazed.

But as the significance of the lesson he was drawing from the text became clear to them, astonishment gave place to an almost ominous, certainly an unsympathetic, attention.

Never in his career had he had more heedful listeners. As if magically, the news seemed to have percolated to the most obtuse intelligences that grave matters were transpiring. Once or twice there was a sibilant inrush of breath from some auditor too dumfounded for control. But for the rest there was

utter silence. There was not a rustle nor a cough. The congregation of St. Viateur's had changed its character. It was playing a different rôle. It was as if an epicure had bitten caviar and tasted quinine. It waited.

Meanwhile, the Reverend Arnold Imrie was recording his new-found belief that the peace of Christ was not a complacent acceptance of earthly misery, but a dynamic struggle against the few who dispossessed — or would dispossess — the many; that the Man of Sorrows was a rebel, seeking, not to bring men to heaven, but heaven to men; that he brought a sword, sharp-pointed for the blood of injustice, for which, injustice, terrified, crucified him; and he was asking, very simply but very clearly, whether the charge of heretics that time had brought about a change between preaching Christ and preaching dogma, was true.

He went calmly on, opening, though they never suspected it, the innermost chambers of his heart to them, taking them into his confidence as he had never before taken even himself. For the first time, he did not preach: it was rather a mutual inventory before the God they worshipped, a dispassionate analysis of the institutions they revered, to see if, since they had become idols, they had deteriorated or no.

Only once did his emotionless manner desert him. Then without euphemism, he lashed them for their

luxuries, for the repletion of their bellies, for the ideals of the spirit that they had allowed to die of starvation. For a few minutes he waxed eloquent and bitter and cruel. With a crash of his fist on the pulpit rail he repeated the words, "*let him take up his cross and follow me,*" and hammered home to them, with brutal logic and remorseless clarity, what they meant.

It was a new Jesus which he painted for them, in bold sharp strokes. The Lamb of God, the doe-eyed martyr to vicarious atonement, vanished, and in his place stood a virile battler for human rights.

The strongest sentiment in the minds of the listeners was one of bewilderment. They watched, with something approaching admiration, the portrait as it grew more vivid before their eyes, and a few even admitted in it a specious fidelity. But none could comprehend at all clearly the reason for their rector's complete and sudden estrangement from the conceptions which he had worshipped hitherto with an orthodoxy beyond suspicion.

And yet the explanation was profoundly simple. In the first place he had come away from his talk with Judith to study Scripture with new eyes. In words so familiar that he could quote them he had found new meaning. He had realised, with a shock, that always until then he had given a superficial acceptance to the interpretations of others, and in

natural consequence he had set himself to the business of interpretation assisted by nothing but his own powers of logic and analysis. Once the new keystone was placed, the change in the entire arch was inevitable and immediate. He had only to secure a new postulate: the rest of the syllogism followed as a matter of course.

The second part of the explanation was simpler still. From the time that man emerged from his female origin, man has been doing things, both sublime and foolish, to win the regard of woman. In the little boy who jumps off a high place because a little girl " dared " him to jump, may be found the key to Imrie's puzzling transformation. Judith had dared him to be more man than clergyman. His eyes were fixed on her as he jumped.

There can be no doubt that he went further than he had intended when he entered the pulpit. But as speech clarifies thought, the very course of maintaining his new argument strengthened him in it, and his fears and hesitancies vanished. He left no doubt in other minds, as to his meaning, as he cleared away the doubts in his own.

Judith, listening in amazement with the rest, realised, as did few, how characteristic of him it all was. She felt that she could almost trace the steps which had brought him to this point. Her own attitude had played a large share, she felt certain. Her

doubts had set up doubts in him. He had tried to dissipate them, and had failed. So far he was quite like other men. But then he had resolved to tell his congregation that he had failed. In that he was different. Other men would have waited longer, have hesitated and put off and pondered, some to the end of their lives. Not so with Imrie. A resolution once made was turned into action without delay, be the consequences what they might. The one outstanding distinction of his nature was his unfailing courage.

The whole procedure, involved and incomprehensible and distressing as she knew it must appear to most minds, was perfectly clear to her. She had put questions to him that he could not answer. So he had resolved to put them, without equivocation or delay, to his congregation. That to them these questions did not betoken honest doubt, but downright heresy, was no concern of his. They had to hear, and having heard, they had to decide what their significance was for him and for them, and for the relations between them. That he realised quite clearly that he was jeopardising his professional future, she did not for a moment doubt. But that realisation, she knew very well, would only confirm him the more strongly in his purpose.

Suddenly she realised that he was bringing his remarkable sermon to a close. His voice sank, becom-

ing almost conversational, though it penetrated to the furthest corner of the church.

It was the closing plea of a lawyer before a jury of his peers. He had shown what he believed to be the fallacies in their relations to the Lord Jesus, and the fallacies in his own; he had shown the failure of the Church, which meant them as well as himself, to live up to its social significance; he had demonstrated with vivid brutality, the inconsistency between their professions of faith and their daily lives; he had humbled himself before his ideals and sought to make them do likewise; and now, very gently, he was asking for the verdict.

He paused for a moment before his last words, and swept the congregation with his eyes. They saw far more than was there to see. They saw his seminary days, when the world looked so simple and so enticing. They saw the early days of his charge of St. Viateur's, when the knowledge of actual achievement was not troubled by spiritual doubts. They saw the Sundays, innumerable, when his words, received by the great ones of the community with admiration and approval, had been followed by the little flatteries to which no human heart is immune. Then a lump rose in his throat, and his gaze came nearer. Something like tears came into his eyes as he surveyed these friends whom he was deliberately transforming into something perilously like enemies

— for no reason save that he must. They would never understand — never. And yet he must go on — to the end if need be. That was his destiny.

Quietly he put his last question to them, "What are you going to do about it?" Then he closed his eyes for a moment, opened them to stare unseeing at judge and jury, sighed softly, and abruptly left the pulpit.

The answer was not long in coming. He knew that it would not be, and he dallied in the vestry, purposely. Judge Wolcott, kindly and genial, approached him with outstretched hand.

"Arnold, it was magnificent," he said, with a paternal clap on his shoulder, adding, in an undertone, though no one was near, "but I don't think I would repeat it."

"Why?" asked Imrie coldly.

The Judge tugged at his white beard nervously. Then he patted the younger man again with what seemed like a somewhat exaggerated friendliness.

"Oh, come now, Arnold, don't get on your high horse. You know what I mean. That sort of thing's all right — occasionally. But it's juvenile. . . ."

"Juvenile?"

"Well, perhaps not that. But it's young, sophomoric, journalistic, sentimental — you understand, I'm sure."

"Quite."

"We have some pretty conservative members here, you know. As laymen go, they're powerful." He stopped and watched Imrie, waiting for the effect of his words to sink in. "For a young man, practically at the outset of his career, to offend them — would be unwise."

Imrie's coldness dissolved, and he smiled broadly.

"We know each other too well to fence, Judge. Let's be frank with each other."

"But I am frank," cried the older man.

"Not entirely. You're trying to reprimand me without seeming to do it."

"Not at all. I'm merely — ah — advising you."

"I see. And if I don't choose to heed the — ah — advice . . . what then?"

The judge lifted his finely manicured fingers and shrugged his shoulders. "You're not a boy, Arnold. You have eyes — and ears."

Imrie laughed again, but not pleasantly.

"Is this official?"

"I don't understand."

"I mean, are you talking to me as a friend — or as a vestryman?"

"My dear boy, the vestrymen are your friends."

"Please don't quibble. There's the same dual personality in you that there is in me talking among friends and preaching in this pulpit. Aren't you pre-

paring me now — as a friend — for what you might have to say — as a vestryman?"

"If you insist — yes," the Judge admitted, rather testily. It nettled him to be put on the defensive, his subtleness openly contemned.

"In other words," Imrie rose from his chair and walked over to the window, where he paused for a moment. "In other words, you bear unofficial orders."

"Not orders."

"Advice then — advice for me to preach what the people want — and let what they need go hang?"

"Arnold — my dear boy," cried the Judge pacifically, following him to the window. But Imrie edged away.

"As the Spanish poet put it, 'Since the public pay 'tis just, methinks, we by their compass steer, and write the nonsense that they love to hear'," he murmured gently.

"Really, I —" the Judge was at a loss for words. He had anticipated no such reception as this.

Imrie's voice changed and his lips narrowed.

"You may tell the — er — powerful laymen — Judge Wolcott, that I take my orders in these matters from my conscience, not from them."

The older man stared at him in amazement.

"Are you crazy?" he demanded, and a light flickered in his own eyes.

" Obviously," said Imrie shortly.

" Do you realise what this means? "

" Perfectly."

" Are you prepared to abide by the consequences? " That the Judge was thoroughly aroused was plain. He did not like to have subordinates treat him in such fashion, and any notion that Imrie was not a subordinate was of course only a polite fiction. It was incredible that this young fool should think it anything else.

" My resignation will be in your hands this afternoon," said Imrie quietly.

" Come, Arnold my lad," cried the Judge, honestly dismayed by the course their conversation had taken. " You mustn't be offended — really you mustn't. Let's get together and discuss this like men. We . . ."

" There is nothing to discuss," said Imrie with a shortness which brooked no further opening. " You have stated your case with perfect clearness. I hope I have stated mine equally so. I think that ends it."

" My dear young friend," said the older man with an effort at patience which only partially concealed his increasing exasperation. " I had no intention of stirring up all this excitement. I come to you with a friendly word of advice and you treat me like — like a policeman! Egad, one would think I was your worst enemy."

"I'm sorry — really — I . . ."

"Then forget it. Come — we'll take a stroll and talk about the weather. There's a good fellow. No sense in letting a little difference of opinion make us lose our tempers."

But behind the Judge's conciliatory words was a secret resolve merely to wait for a more propitious moment and then to reopen the discussion — with a tact, of course, acquired by experience. So, after a desultory discourse, in which he touched upon a number of obviously unimportant matters, and during which the younger man was uniformly silent, he renewed his circuitous attack. He tried very hard to be calm and judicial, but Imrie's taciturn antagonism quite overthrew his poise. And when the clergyman remained obdurate to all his subtlest questions and cajoleries and indisputable logic, the Judge lost his temper.

"You're an obstinate ass," he almost shouted.

"There's no doubt of it," said Imrie quietly. There was of course nothing more to be said after that, so they parted, the Judge to spread the news of the incredible stubbornness of the clergyman, and Imrie to a miserable walk, alone.

He was wretched, of course. He knew perfectly well what the outcome of his folly might be. But counteracting his regret at that, was a glorious feeling of achievement, of having conquered the

devil in a pitched battle, and of having emerged with no stain on his shield. To all the world, *Don Quixote,* slaying windmills, was an "obstinate ass," but to *Don Quixote* he was a hero. Imrie's feelings, as he battled with the wind, were a curious complex of dejection and triumph.

When he returned to his rooms, he found a message from Judith, insisting upon his presence at supper that evening. For a little he debated the acceptance of the invitation. He felt reluctant at facing her. He wondered what she would think of him. He feared that she might doubt his sincerity. But he also had a powerful curiosity as to what she would say, and her verdict was of more importance to him than that of all the vestries in the land. He decided to go.

She greeted him with greater enthusiasm than she had ever before manifested toward him.

"It was wonderful, Arnold, wonderful. I never guessed it was in you. I can't tell you how proud I was of you. It was a splendid sermon — it was splendid courage. It was — if only I had the words . . ."

"You don't need words," he said softly, taking her hands into his, and looking tenderly into her eyes.

She continued to pour oil on his troubled soul, but she withdrew her hands, and not again did she

allow herself to come so close to him. He felt vaguely disappointed, even in the midst of her praise.

"I am so humiliated for what I said to you last week," she cried.

"It was what made — this," he said simply.

Suddenly her gaze went beyond him, and he followed it to the doorway. His face clouded. A gust of annoyance swept him for Judith, for this trick she had played him. It was unfair of her thus to force him to meet a man she knew he detested. But his irritation changed to surprise, when Good, with his long awkward stride, hurried toward him, and seized his hand.

"Mr. Imrie," he said genuinely, "I was in your church this morning. I want to tell you that that was one of the biggest things I ever saw. My congratulations probably don't mean much to you, but they're yours without a shadow of a reservation. That was the noblest sermon I ever heard."

The man's enthusiasm was so deep and so obviously sincere that Imrie's instinctive antipathy was banished. After all, he told himself on reflection, his dislike for Good was based on his antagonism for the smug hypocrisy, the senseless irreligion that he had himself attacked only that morning. In a way they were brothers in a common cause. It was with a very different feeling than he had expected

that he accepted the tall man's congratulations and with the utmost sincerity that he thanked him.

Supper proved a gay function. Judith was at her happiest, and Good's anecdotes followed one another in merry succession. Imrie found himself insensibly warming to the man he had disliked so intensely, and rather grateful than otherwise to Judith for having arranged so pleasant a meeting.

But when the meal was finished and they were in the library with their coffee, mirth seemed to leave the gathering, and a certain constraint fell upon them all. Each of the men wanted to talk to Judith of matters which were too intimate to share with the other. Their remarks diminished rapidly in frequency and extent, and presently there was complete silence. It was necessary for Judith to break it. She thought it best to get to the heart of things immediately. She addressed herself first to Good.

"Shall I tell him what we have done?" she asked, as if not quite sure of herself. The tall man nodded, not very enthusiastically, it seemed to Imrie.

"Well . . ." Again she hesitated. "I suppose it's best to break the news without any preliminaries?" Good nodded his assent.

"Still, it's so *very* surprising — however, the fact is . . . we've bought a newspaper — *The Dispatch!*"

"Yes?" Imrie refused to show any surprise at

all. Obviously he thought it was some subtle jest they were playing upon him.

"You don't understand," cried Judith, "I'm the owner of a newspaper."

"Well — what for?"

"To tell the truth," she said solemnly.

Imrie smiled indulgently. "That's praiseworthy, I'm sure," he said ironically.

That was too much for Good. Obviously the clergyman did not understand. He must be made to understand. His timidity slipped from him and he plunged into an explanation of the great plans they were making.

Imrie listened attentively, and as he caught the significance of the idea his manner changed from scepticism to something approaching enthusiasm. Then his face slowly hardened and a semblance of a sneer formed on his lips.

"Telling the truth may get you into trouble," he said half to himself.

"Of course," cried Good, "it not only may — it's certain to."

Imrie turned to Judith. "Are you as optimistic as Mr. Good?"

Her lips narrowed ever so slightly and a faint suggestion of a gleam came into her eyes. Then she shrugged her shoulders and laughed lightly. "If trouble comes — I shall be ready."

"But you're not sure that it will come?"

"I 'm not experienced in such things. Were you sure of trouble when you delivered your sermon this morning?"

"Quite."

"Did it come?"

"It did."

Imrie smiled pleasantly enough but the bitterness of his tone was not lost on Judith.

"Arnold — what do you mean — what trouble?"

"What would you expect? I have resigned."

"The devil!" cried Good.

Judith's amazement was not feigned. It struck Imrie that it would have been more pleasant to him had she shown less astonishment at the course he had taken. "But it isn't final?" she cried.

"As far as I am concerned, it is. It is not at all unlikely that the vestry will find it final too." More than ever Imrie resented the presence of Good. He wanted to explain to Judith the part she had played in his resolution. That made him tell the story of his interview with Judge Wolcott very perfunctorily, and dismiss the subject as quickly as he could.

But Good was not easily put off, although Judith seemed to sense the purpose in his reticence.

"What will you do if you resign?" he asked bluntly.

"Not 'if,'" said Imrie coldly, "I have already resigned."

Good ignored the snub. "What'll you do next?" he persisted.

"I have no idea," said Imrie, turning away. A moment later he rose to leave.

Good eyed him quizzically as they shook hands, and smiled, half wistfully, half amusedly. "You don't understand me, Mr. Imrie," he said with characteristic candour; "you don't think I understand. I'm older than you. I have been through things. Some day — perhaps — oh, well, we'll wait for the day, won't we?"

Imrie was puzzled. He was vaguely grateful, too, though he could find no words to express his gratitude. He stared perplexedly at Good, who had picked up a magazine and appeared deeply engrossed. Then he shrugged his shoulders helplessly and turned to go.

"Some time," he said to Judith, who had followed him to the door, "I should like to see you and tell you all about it." He looked at her longingly as he spoke. He seemed very tired, she thought.

"I understand," said Judith. He wondered if she really did.

A cold rain had been falling steadily all evening.

The street lamps flickered dismally through the mist and the trees dripped soddenly. It was a fitting end, he thought, to the dreariest day he had ever known. The morning had seen the ruin of his flowering career, cut down by his own ruthless hand, under no compulsion save that of his own senseless conscience. And the evening, as a bitter crown to the day, had seen the salt of jealousy ground into his wounds. The contrast between himself standing on the brink of indecision, wandering aimlessly from disgust to humiliation, without satisfaction in the past or hope for the future; and that other man — who had no indecision, whose hopes were half realised — made his heart heavy within him.

It was a saddened and chaotic Imrie who plodded on through the lonely streets striving to regain some fragment of the philosophy which had deserted him so utterly.

CHAPTER VII

"IF PEOPLE ONLY *KNEW!*"

A LITTLE after three o'clock on the afternoon of the day which first saw Judith Wynrod a newspaper proprietor, Good walked into the office of *The Dispatch* and asked to see Mr. Bassett, the managing editor.

"Will you be good enough to indicate the purpose of your visit on this slip," said the old pensioner at the information desk.

Good took the pencil held out to him and in a bold hand wrote: "Mr. Good wishes to see Mr. Bassett."

Cerberus smiled faintly, as if courtesy alone prevented him from totally ignoring so feeble a jest. "That will hardly suffice, Mr. Good. We have our rules, you know," he said firmly.

"Of course," admitted Good patiently. "But all rules have exceptions."

"We know none here, sir," said the old man pompously, while loungers in the anteroom smiled their enjoyment of the scene.

"But, my dear man," cried Good in exasperation,

"I don't want to write him a letter. I want to talk to him. Will you take this in, or will I have to take it myself?" He seemed so capable of carrying out the latter alternative that after some further protestation the disgusted warder disappeared into the private offices.

Almost immediately he reappeared, a faint but plainly triumphant smile curling the corners of his lips.

"Mr. Bassett says—" he paused significantly. Then he added suavely, "He regrets that he is very busy and is unable to see you."

Good smiled. "That's old stuff," he said placidly, with his hand on the wicket. Without further parley he opened it and marched in.

A small man in his shirt sleeves, his thin lips grimly compressed, sat at a desk piled high in disorderly confusion, chewing an unlighted cigar. He did not look up as Good entered. But at the latter's deprecating cough he wheeled around in his chair and glared savagely.

"How the hell did you get in here?" he demanded.

"Through the doorway," replied Good mildly.

"That door says 'private'—and I'm busy."

Good sat down and leisurely drawing his pipe from his pocket filled it.

"I suppose you didn't see that sign outside?" in-

quired the small man sarcastically. "It said 'no smoking.'"

"That was outside," said Good shortly, without looking up. "I'm in now. But look here, Mr. Bassett," he continued with a quizzical smile, "don't irritate me. It . . ."

"Don't irritate you?" Bassett stared blankly. "Who the . . ."

"No — it might cost you your job."

The editor laughed harshly. "Hell, you must want a story suppressed."

"What makes you think so?"

"They all begin by threatening to get my scalp."

"Well, that's a bum guess this time." Good drew his chair up beside the desk and pushed a cleared place among the papers. "Now see here, Mr. Bassett, I have something to tell you."

"It's about time you began telling it," said Bassett dryly.

"I had to get you in a receptive mood before I could begin. Now I'm ready."

"Fire away." The editor lit his cigar and waved his hand resignedly.

"Quick is quick. To get to the point, this paper has changed hands."

The expression on Bassett's face changed immediately. "You mean — it's sold?"

"Just so."

"Who got it — the Le Gore crowd?" It was Bassett's profession always to be prepared for the unusual, but it was manifest from his knitted eyebrows and his nervous drumming on the desk that he was astonished.

"No, Miss Judith Wynrod."

"The millionaire kid!" cried Bassett. "What the devil does she want a newspaper for? Is she going to run it?"

"No," said Good calmly, "I am."

"*You?* Who in thunder are *you?*"

Good leaned back and put his thumbs in his waistcoat. "I," he said without smiling, "am the crafty bunco-steerer. With misguided confidence the boss is going to let me run her paper for her. In future, my profane friend, you're going to take your orders from me."

"Do you know anything about newspapering?"

"Quite a bit, yes."

Bassett rose and clasping his hands behind his back, strode rapidly back and forth, without speaking, for several moments. Finally he stopped and shifting his cigar savagely from one side of his mouth to the other, stared vacantly into space.

"Well," he said slowly, "the first thing a new owner usually does is to fire the staff. I suppose I might as well begin getting ready and packing up my things. That's one of the beauties in this news-

paper game. There's no monotony in your job."

Good laughed cheerfully. "I wouldn't be in any hurry about it," he said; "nobody's slated for the blue envelope yet."

"What's the policy going to be?" asked Bassett after a pause.

"None," said Good shortly.

"I don't get you."

"You will."

"The orders'll come from down-stairs as usual, I suppose?"

Good betrayed himself for the first time during the interview. "No," he cried, bringing his fist down on the desk so that the papers fluttered, "that's one place they won't come from." Bassett laughed, not very pleasantly.

"Good stuff, old top. I love to hear that line of talk. It's inspiring. But they all start that way. I've been in the game a long time. I've pulled the Washington on tank town weeklies, trimmed boiler plate on all-home-print, and attained the eminence of space writer on county seat dailies. I've done time in the newspaper game from soup to nuts, and I've yet to see the sheet that isn't run from the business office."

"You've got something to live for then, haven't you?" said Good sweetly.

"I've always said that there weren't any sur-

prises in a newspaper man's life," continued Bassett thoughtfully. "Maybe I'm wrong."

"Life's full of surprises. That's what makes it interesting. But that butters no turnips. I didn't come here to give you some new ideas about life. What I want is for you to get your staff together in the city room, say about five o'clock, for fifteen minutes. I want to talk to the boys. Can you arrange it?"

"I guess the world won't stop moving."

"All right. See you later." Good put his hand on the door.

"Say," said Bassett, sharply biting his lip, "have you been stringing me?"

Good laughed. "Call up John Baker, Miss Wynrod's lawyer, and get it straight. Don't be so suspicious."

"That's my business," said Bassett, sourly. As the door closed on his strange visitor, he sighed heavily. "It's a great business . . . sold up the river — damned slave!" Then he sighed again and fell to sharpening a pencil.

Promptly at five Good returned. "Got them all here?" he demanded.

"Nearly all."

"That's fine. Let's break the news."

Bassett lead the way to the city room, and with a clap of his hands achieved silence. "Boys," he

said in a tone which was curiously unfamiliar to them, "you probably all know by now, being good news-hounds, that the paper has been sold. Mr. Brent Good, the new managing editor, wishes to say a few words."

Good rose and stood looking thoughtfully at the crowd for a moment before he spoke.

"Gentlemen, the habit of a lifetime is hard to break. Mr. Bassett proves it by the way he's coloured the facts. I'm not to be managing editor. Mr. Bassett will continue in that capacity as long as his editing and managing seems to be satisfactory. I am merely to be the personal representative of the owner of the paper. Now I have one or two things to say to you.

"To begin with, I want to say that nobody is going to get fired, with the possible exception of several men from the advertising department, the reason for which will appear later. The first question that Mr. Bassett put to me was about the policy of the new paper, and I replied that there wouldn't be any policy. All we have is a purpose, and that purpose is, in one single word, to tell all the truth all the time.

"We haven't any axes to grind. And there's only one boss. For the first time in your lives, I guess, you can write the truth without being afraid of stepping on somebody's toes. From now on, the

business office gives no orders. And if the advertising department can't sell space without editorial influence thrown in, then we'll get a new advertising department or do without advertising. Instead of looking at every story with your mind on 'who will it hurt,' from now on I want you to look at every story with your mind on 'who will it help — or *what.*' You boys have a chance to run the kind of a newspaper that every newspaper man wants to run. It's up to you to make it or break it." Good's voice broke a little and he turned away. There was silence for a moment. Then a cheer shook the room. When it subsided, Bassett's dry voice was heard.

"Kindly don't overlook the fact, gentlemen, that we put the paper to bed to-night as usual. You can celebrate when that's done." Then he turned to Good.

"Come back in my office, will you, Mr. Good. There are a few questions I want to ask you."

"Cut out the 'Mister,' Bassett. I'm just one of the staff. I don't own anything, you know."

"That goes with me," said Bassett, "but look out I don't call you something worse. I've got a bad temper."

"Well," laughed Good, "I'm bigger than you." They went into Bassett's private office.

"What I want to get at," said the latter perplexedly, after they were seated, "is what line of thought you intend to follow. What angles do you mean to push?"

"You don't understand," said Good patiently, "all we want is the truth."

"Oh, fiddlesticks," cried Bassett impatiently. "That's fine for a rights-of-man declaration, but we're running a newspaper. You've got to have balance. What's true and interesting and desirable to one class of people isn't to another. What kind of people do you intend to cater to?"

"I see," said Good. He was silent for a moment. "I guess we want to print," he said finally, "what's true to *most* people. Anything that gives the greatest good to the greatest number, ought to be our field."

"That's what I'm getting at. Now look at this." The managing editor fumbled in his desk and produced a mass of paper. "You probably know that the girls in the department stores are trying to stage a strike. It doesn't amount to much — yet — but the police have pulled some pretty raw work. Now from the girls' standpoint this stuff ought to get publicity. But from the standpoint of those who own the newspapers it shouldn't — and it hasn't had a line except in *The World,* which, of course, only

goes to the working people. Incidentally, *The World* has been running some pretty good sob-stuff lately."

"Yes," said Good quietly, "I wrote it."

Bassett looked up quickly. "Oh — are you one of that socialist outfit?"

"No more socialist than you are plutocrat. I'm just a newspaper man — like yourself."

"Conscienceless, eh?"

"Consciences are expensive."

"Yes," said Bassett pensively, "most of us have to let the little darlings starve to death. I bet if we slipped into the next life with a murderer and a thief, St. Peter'd give 'em both a golden harp and . . ."

"Oh, cheer up," laughed Good, "let's not worry about preferred positions in the next edition. We've got plenty to do with this one."

"Well, then," said the small man, "how about playing up this working girl stuff as a starter on the new idea? That ought to appeal to you."

"I'm afraid you don't quite understand," explained Good patiently. "This isn't going to be an organ of the working classes."

"That's all right, too, but in your talk out there to the boys you said you were going to print all the truth all the time. Well, this is true and people certainly ought to know about it. Those girls are

getting a hell of a rotten deal. What about it?"

Good was silent. "Frankly, I don't know," he murmured.

"I know what you're thinking," said Bassett with a suggestion of a sneer. "We're carrying full pages for Corey's and the rest. But I thought you weren't going to take orders from the business office."

"We're not," said Good. "But we have to take our orders from Miss Wynrod."

"That's right," agreed Bassett. "I hadn't thought of that. Well, why don't you put it up to her?"

"By Jove," cried Good, "I will! I'll do just that. You get your stuff together. I'll see her tonight and get her O.K. — if I can."

"Here's a suggestion," said the managing editor; "it may help to get her interested. The girls are going to hold a meeting out on Dempsey Street. Why don't you take Miss Wynrod out there and let her see for herself? If she's any kind of a girl she'll hear some yarns that'll wilt her collar, I'll bet."

Good was thoughtful. "That's not a bad idea. I'll see what I can do." He turned to go. Then he looked back from the doorway. "By the way, Bassett, I forgot to tell you — Miss Wynrod has a young brother. He's been a waster so far, but I think he's got some good stuff in him. Anyway,

he's coming into the paper too. Of course he doesn't know anything about newspapers — he doesn't know anything about anything — but he can learn. I thought it would be best to start him in the business office. What do you think?"

"That's the most important place to him," said Bassett sourly. "Keep him out of this end of it, for the love of Mike! Jenkins loves cubs; I don't."

"I think you're right; anyway we'll start him with Jenkins. And I'll let you hear from me to-night in plenty of time about this story."

"The bull-dog closes at eleven."

"I'll let you know by ten."

As Good ate his frugal dinner in a cheap restaurant, he debated seriously as to the best method of attaining his end. If he went straight to Judith and boldly requested her acquiescence in the course planned, he felt quite confident of securing it. But that did not appear to him sufficient. Her sympathies, thus gained, would be superficial. To be of lasting value they must be spontaneous. Finally he took his resolution and went to the telephone.

"Miss Wynrod," he said immediately when she answered, "there is to be a meeting on the west side to-night that I'd like very much to have you attend. I am sure it will interest you. Will you come?" And when she hesitated momentarily he added, "I am quite sure you won't regret it." To

his great delight she assented readily enough, and half an hour later he found himself in her limousine with her, bound for a section of the city that was probably as unfamiliar to her as the heart of China.

Briefly he explained the character of the meeting, but diplomatically he held back his real purpose in taking her to it. She was frankly interested, nevertheless, and plied him with questions regarding its circumstances and causes, to which he was not slow in making reply.

"If all these dreadful things are true, how does it happen that I have never heard about them? There has never been anything in the papers."

"No," he assented, smiling in triumph under cover of darkness, "there hasn't been anything in the papers. That is," he added, "not in any of the papers you would be likely to read. *The World* has had some stuff." But before they had had time to discuss the question further the car had reached its destination. Good led the way to a place in the balcony where they not only had a good view of the platform but could see the crowd below as well.

A red-headed girl was playing a very much out-of-tune piano and playing it very badly. But over the music, and almost drowning it was the steady shuffle of feet, and a rising wave of whispers and laughter as the hall rapidly filled. The air was heavily odorous and the gas lights flared garishly,

thrusting the stark shabbiness of the hall and its occupants into high relief. But all that was forgotten in the indefinable emotion which surcharged the atmosphere. Without knowing exactly why, Judith felt her throat tighten and her heart thrill But it was an old story to Good and he spent his time surreptitiously watching the effect of the scene upon his companion.

Presently the speakers of the evening filed onto the platform, and one of them, stepping up to the table, rapped sharply with her gavel. She was a woman just approaching middle age, very plainly but neatly dressed, with a face not handsome, but so full of quiet determination as to make one look twice.

"That's Myra Horgan," whispered Good, "President of the Women's Trade Union League. She's a wonder."

Miss Horgan, with a few words, introduced the first speaker, one Casper, of the Building Trades Council. He was a little man with a beaming red face, and stiff, close-cropped white hair.

"When they talk about women and the right to vote," he began, surveying the audience with twinkling eyes, "I think of you and what fools you be. But you're no worse than unorganized men. Do they work us brick-layers and masons twelve hours a day, nights too? They do not. Do they pay us

six dollars a week? They do not. Do they fire us for having opinions of our own? They do not. Do they treat us as human beings entitled to the same respect as themselves? They do, and why? Because we ain't one but many. If we deal with them as individuals they smash us as you'd smash a toothpick. But they can't deal with us as individuals. They've got to deal with us altogether. But one thing remember, my girls. It's a fine thing to have a union but a hard thing to get it. You've got to suffer. You've got to give up things. I guess you know that already. But you've got to keep at it. It's great when you have it, but it's hell getting it. And don't forget this. You've got to stick by the other fellow if the other fellow is going to stick to you. If one goes out, you've all got to go out, and stay out if you starve."

He sat down, wiping his brow carefully, amid a thunder of applause from the audience. Suddenly a thought seemed to strike him and he jumped up with hand uplifted. The crowd silenced at once. "I forgot to tell you the main thing for why I came here to-night," he said sheepishly. "I'm no orator, as you all can see. Your handsome young faces drove the thought clean out of my mind. But this I will say, I am here to-night to tell you that we of the Federation will back you to the limit with money and influence and all we've got. Go to it!" Again he

sat down, amid a repeated burst of clapping and cheers.

"No," said Good. "He's no orator. But he's a big man. They'll get somewhere if they follow him."

Speaker after speaker followed one another in rapid succession, each with her message of fear, or hope, or encouragement. There was surprisingly little denunciation, thought Judith, of the powers against whom they were in revolt. All the speakers were too intent upon means and methods to waste breath in idle denunciation. She expressed her astonishment.

"Their feeling for their employers goes without saying," said Good shortly.

Suddenly Judith gave a little cry. "Why, there's Mrs. Dodson." A woman, inconspicuously dressed and well on in years, but with such a spirit of youth and kindliness in her face as to belie her grey hairs, had begun to speak. Her first words were the signal for such a storm of applause that she had to halt momentarily.

"What a favourite she is!" exclaimed Judith.

"She has cause to be," said Good. "These girls have no better friend."

"Isn't it strange," said Judith in amazement. "I've known her all my life. I had no idea she was so interested in this sort of thing."

Good smiled. "She doesn't talk much about it, does she?"

Mrs. Dodson, speaking with trained eloquence, was laying out a plan of campaign so bold in conception that Judith, acquainted only with the more obvious side of her life, was dumfounded.

"If the people who know her uptown could hear her now," she cried, "they'd be stupefied. They'd call her a traitor to her class."

"She is a paradox," admitted Good, "but I think this is her truest side." And the prolonged cheering which accompanied the conclusion of her words seemed to indicate that her auditors thought so too.

There was a little pause after Mrs. Dodson had finished, and the red-headed young person at the piano resumed her activities. But the delay was only momentary. A slender girl, plainly dressed, apparently not over nineteen years of age, with her arm in a sling, made her way to the front of the platform.

"I'm no speaker," she began in a low voice but which penetrated to the farthest part of the hall, "and there ain't many of you as knows me. I'm only a picket. I can't give you union backing like Mr. Casper, and I can't give you money like Mrs. Dodson, and I can't give you ideas like Miss Horgan. All I've got is my two feet and my two hands and my tongue — though my tongue ain't as good

as my legs, as the cop that pinched me will tell you. But you've all been thinking and talking about what you was going to do. Now I want to tell you what's being done while you're talking. Look at this —" She pointed to the arm that was in the sling. "This is what the police do. The copper that twisted my arm gets his pay from the taxpayers, but he gets his orders from our bosses. I got this for talkin' to girls as they came out of the stores. I was lucky not to get anythin' worse, as some of the other girls can tell you. I want to tell you girls," she clenched her fist and her voice shrilled, "that the only way you'll get respect out of these capitalists is to *force* it out of 'em, and a good many of you is goin' to get hurt in the job."

"How horrible!" exclaimed Judith softly. "Is that really true?"

"Yes," said Good, "it is. I happen to know the case. The doctors say that her arm will probably never be of much use to her again. A detective twisted her wrist for not moving on when she was ordered to. He claimed she kicked him."

"And I hope she did!" snapped Judith vindictively. Good smiled quizzically, but before he could say anything the girl on the platform had resumed speaking.

"I wisht I could tell you what's in my mind," she said slowly. "I ain't no speaker, but this is the

principal thing I want to say to you girls. If I can stick it out I guess you can. That's about all I've got to say." She turned and fled precipitately. There was not much handclapping after her exit, not because she had not aroused sympathy but because exaltation had given place to a grim determination better expressed in silence. There was a momentary pause in the proceedings. Then a girl stood up in the crowd.

"I want to tell you that that girl is right," she declared fiercely. "My sister was knocked down by a copper and kicked and broke one of her ribs. If you're going into this thing you want to go with your eyes open." As she sat down, another rose, and another and another, until half a dozen girls had given their experiences, each one of which brought a gasp of horror to Judith's lips.

"Why, this is dreadful," she cried. "I never dreamed . . ."

But Good merely smiled to himself. "They've only told one side of it," he said. "There are things — much worse."

Judith shuddered understandingly but said nothing further until they were in the motor on the way home. "I never heard anything more terrible," she cried, "or more surprising. If people only *knew,* such things couldn't take place. Decent people wouldn't countenance such brutality."

"No," admitted Good, "but decent people don't know anything about it."

"And why don't they?" she demanded. "Why aren't they told? Why aren't they *forced* to know about it?"

"Would you suggest a house-to-house canvass?" he asked ironically.

"Don't be silly. Why don't the newspapers take it up?"

"It isn't news to them."

Then the obvious thought struck her. "Why," she laughed, "I almost forgot. We have a newspaper of our own. Why can't we tell the story those girls told, in *The Dispatch?*"

"For the same reason that the other papers can't," he said softly.

"And what is that?"

"They don't dare."

"Don't dare? I'm afraid I don't understand."

"Who has the keenest interest in keeping wrist-twisting out of sight?"

"The police?"

"No. Who loses if the girls win? Who suffers if they organise, raise wages and improve conditions?"

"Their employers, I suppose."

"Just so. And who are their employers?"

"The department stores?"

"Well, then, isn't it perfectly clear? Who are the newspapers' heaviest advertisers?"

"Oh,—"

"Miss Wynrod," said Good seriously, "to champion the cause of those girls and to tell the truth about what they are suffering might cost *The Dispatch* — a great deal of money."

Judith was silent for a moment. "In other words, we are hired by the department stores to be neutral."

"Precisely," said Good.

"Suppose we snapped our fingers at them?"

"I've already told you what would happen."

"But I thought you wanted a free newspaper?"

"I did and do, Miss Wynrod."

"How many curious things I'm learning," said Judith. Then, with a shudder, she added, "What a dreadful neighbourhood this is. Did you ever see so many children?"

"Do children make neighbourhoods dreadful?" he asked sarcastically, nettled by her irrelevance. But she was silent, remaining so until they reached downtown.

"I think,— if you'll let me off at *The Dispatch* office . . ." said Good stiffly.

Mechanically she gave the order to the chauffeur but made no reply. He wondered what was going through her mind. Her silence seemed to indicate

that his great dream had been shattered before it had been well launched. She had broken at the first pressure. He might have expected as much. Environment and training could not be so quickly counteracted. But none the less it was bitterly disappointing. He dreaded the word he would have to give to Bassett.

"Good night, Miss Wynrod," he said quietly as the car stopped and he got out. "I hope you found the evening not unprofitable."

"Mr. Good," said Judith slowly, looking at him steadily, "I want everybody who reads *The Dispatch* to-morrow to read — about that girl and her broken arm. Do you understand?"

His eyes widened. "And you know the consequences?" he whispered huskily.

"I think you have made them quite clear."

"You have friends among the department store owners, Miss Wynrod."

Judith smiled, but it was a grim smile. "I think I can venture where Mrs. Dodson has ventured," she said. Good seized her hand and his voice trembled.

"I was afraid — for a moment, but — you're a wonder! Good night." His emotion communicated itself to her and she did not venture to say anything in reply. She merely shook his hand firmly

and sank back in the cushions. He turned and sped for the office.

"Bassett," he said, with simulated indifference a minute later, "let's see that stuff you've got on the girls."

"You mean," cried Bassett, "you're going to run it?"

"Double leaded," said Good shortly. "Got any pictures?"

"Say," said Bassett, "I've got some stuff that would make dynamite look like lemon candy. We'll make *The World* look like a gospel messenger. I'll make you a bet, Good."

"Yes?"

"I'll bet you a stein of imported Muenchen that there'll be hell let loose to-morrow in several advertising offices we know of."

"Why not ask me for it outright?" asked Good with a smile.

CHAPTER VIII

THE GREATEST GAME IN THE WORLD

On the day set for the beginning of Roger Wynrod's business career, Good introduced him to the more important members of the staff, all of whom expressed their profound pleasure at making his acquaintance, and without further conversation departed to more pressing duties. Their indifference rather nettled him, but he consoled himself by ascribing it to the high pressure under which newspaper offices notoriously laboured. He was quite mollified, however, when he reached the door of the office he was to occupy, and found his name prominently engrossed upon it in letters of gilt. He was also much pleased with the furniture, particularly the desk, a tremendous affair of mahogany, filled with all manner of alluring receptacles. The office, he was gratified to note, while not large, appeared more or less private.

"Now then," said Good, "here's your shop. Get to work. I'll be around the building somewhere if you need me."

Jenkins, the Business Manager, had suggested, rather diffidently, that a good way to begin to work

would be to acquire familiarity with the files of the paper. So, after making a cursory examination of his more material surroundings, he attacked the huge volumes which he found on his table, containing, he was sure, copies of *The Dispatch* for at least a century back.

He pursued the task diligently enough, at first, but it was not long before his interest flagged. One issue seemed painfully like another. It was very quiet in the little room, and as he sat wearily fingering the dusty sheets he felt curiously isolated and futile. The conviction gradually settled upon him that business was hardly as entertaining as it had been described. By eleven o'clock his patience was exhausted. With a word or two, more vigorous than elegant, he swept the bulky tomes upon the floor, and went in search of Jenkins.

The Business Manager ran his hand through his hair helplessly when Roger stated his grievance.

"I've been awful busy, Mr. Wynrod," he said apologetically. "If you'll only be patient. Just a day or two — rushed to death just now, don't you know."

"In a day or two?" cried Roger. "Good Lord, man — two *hours* have been too much for me. Something's simply got to happen or I'll go nutty!"

Jenkins laughed, though not very mirthfully. Inwardly he was a seething cauldron of wrath at the

fate which had afflicted him with so useless an appendage as Mr. Wynrod. He had been harassed enough by the change in ownership, without that.

But fate has a queer way of settling knotty problems very suddenly and very surprisingly. As Jenkins laughed and cursed behind the laugh, a boy put a card on his desk.

"Maybe Good . . . he might have something . . ." he said to Roger abstractedly, as he picked up the card. "Ask Mr. Good to step down here," he called after the retreating boy. "Awful rush these days," he murmured.

Suddenly his whole manner and expression changed completely. His resigned annoyance was transformed into patent excitement. He fingered the card nervously for a moment. Then he looked up at Roger, his brows knitted.

"Would you mind excusing me for just a moment, Mr. Wynrod? There's a gentleman here to see me . . . very important . . ."

Roger resisted an impulse to ask who the gentleman might be who had created such manifest consternation, and turned to leave. But as he put his hand to the door, it opened, and Good entered.

"Hello," said the tall man, "making trouble around here already? What's the . . . ?"

Before he could finish, Jenkins had him by the arm and was drawing him toward the window, whis-

pering excitedly. Roger was as effectually excluded from the conversation as if he had not existed. As he watched the animated gestures of the Business Manager the strange thought struck him that he himself was the subject of the conference. His suspicions were confirmed when Good whistled softly, and, turning suddenly, intimated, in a voice more authoritative than apologetic, that his prompt withdrawal would be appreciated. Roger, deeply offended, was about to comply, when the door opened again, and a man stood on the threshold, twirling his mustache. Jenkins rushed forward to greet him.

"Oh, Mr. Faxon," he cried, "how are you? Glad to see you. Sit down, won't you? I . . ."

Faxon ignored the proffered chair. "Hello, Roger," he said abruptly, "the boy said you were here. Thought I'd butt in."

"Hello, Joe," said Roger, striving to understand the tense atmosphere which seemed to pervade the room. "I'm just bound for my office. Come on up." He noticed with surprise that Jenkins frowned and shook his head savagely at the invitation. "Come on, Joe," he repeated, resentful at Jenkins' behaviour.

But as he put his hand on the door-knob, Good rushed into the breach. "One moment, if you please, Mr. Faxon," he said smoothly. "Mr. Wynrod is hardly familiar enough yet with things

here to be of use to you in — er — matters of business."

Faxon wheeled sharply and stared as if he had not before realised the tall man's presence. "You'll doubtless leave that to me to discover, won't you?" he inquired with studied insolence. Abruptly he turned again to Roger. "Now then, may I see you — alone?"

Roger's eyes wandered from one to the other helplessly. But before he could speak, Good came to the fore again. His jaw was set firmly and his eyes were cold.

"See here, Mr. Faxon," he said, with characteristic disdain of subtlety, "let's not mince matters. Jenkins and I know perfectly well what you're here for. Wynrod doesn't. I'd suggest that we talk things over together."

"Thanks awfully for the advice," snapped Faxon sarcastically. "But I'm not here to see you or Mr. Jenkins. I'm here to see Mr. Wynrod. And I'm here to see him privately — you hear — *privately*. If such a visit is not contrary to the rules of the office, or if Mr. Wynrod is allowed to decide such matters for himself . . ."

Good had kept his gaze fastened on Roger as Faxon spoke, and the flood of colour in the young man's face at the latter's innuendo, had not been lost on him. "You need say no more, Mr. Faxon,"

he interrupted suddenly. Then he turned to Roger. "Wynrod," he said slowly, as if measuring his words, "you know, I believe, who's boss of this paper. Act accordingly." With a low bow to Faxon and a nod to Jenkins, who followed him, he left the room.

"If you know who's boss," said Faxon with a sneer as the door closed, "they apparently don't."

"Appearances are frequently deceiving," said Roger shortly.

"I hope so," snapped Faxon, his face hardening, as he drew a folded newspaper from his pocket and threw it on the desk. "Now then, my boy, I'd like to know the meaning of this?"

"Of what?" asked Roger quietly.

"Oh, don't stall."

"I'm not stalling."

"You mean to say you don't know?" demanded Faxon with honest astonishment.

"You haven't seen fit as yet to tell me."

"This sentimental poppycock you've been running in *The Dispatch* about our strike."

"And what about it?"

Faxon's manner changed and he smiled indulgently.

"You haven't been in business very long, Roger. There are some things you don't understand very clearly."

"Very probably."

"But there are some things, my boy, so elementary that a child could understand them."

"In other words," said Roger coldly, "even I."

"Yes," snapped Faxon brutally, "even you."

"Well, go on."

"In the paper this morning there is a mess of stuff, probably cooked up by that damn fool, Good, taking the side of those girls against us. Now what I want to know is the meaning of it."

"The meaning?"

"Yes. Are you on our side or on theirs?"

"My dear Faxon," said Roger, "you have already told me how little I know about such things. How can you expect me to answer such a question as that? Mr. Good has my sister's confidence and mine. If he ran this article, I believe it to be a good article. And anyway, who the hell are you to come here asking me questions like that?" The young man's temper had suddenly ignited. His face paled and his lips became set in a thin straight line.

Faxon raised his hand. "Now don't get sore, Roger," he said more affably. "I simply want to come to an understanding with you, so we know where each other stands, that's all. Were these articles printed with your sanction or not?" he asked slowly, tapping on the desk with his pencil.

"I wasn't consulted," said Roger simply; "that's not my business."

"Well, damn it," roared Faxon, losing his temper, "it ought to be your business! Isn't it your business to prevent a lot of crack-brained idiots from making a fool out of you?"

"I don't see that they are."

"Well, everybody else sees it. Now look here, Roger. We'll overlook it this time because it wasn't done with your knowledge or consent and you naturally don't understand matters very clearly yet. But it can't happen again, you hear. We won't stand for it."

"And who is supposed to be talking?" asked Roger mildly.

"Who's talking? *I'm* talking! And I'm a vice-president of Corey & Company. That's who's talking."

Roger shrugged his shoulders and lit a cigarette. "Honestly, Joe, I don't get you at all. What's all the fuss about anyway?"

"Good God, man," cried Faxon in exasperation. He drew a long breath, and, drawing his chair up closer to Roger's, began an elementary explanation of certain business relationships.

In the meanwhile Bassett and Jenkins and Good sat staring moodily at one another.

"It's a shame!" exclaimed Bassett, savagely chewing on his unlighted cigar. "He'll twist that kid around his finger. He'll pull the wool over his eyes forty different ways."

"Faxon's a clever fellow," mused Jenkins mournfully.

Good filled his pipe and lighted it. He smoked in silence for a little while.

"The Lord's got to be trusted some time," he sighed finally; "I suppose it might just as well be now — but a little more priming would have helped. Just a little more."

"Oh, the kid will knuckle under, that's certain," snarled Bassett. "There's no doubt of *that*. This whole proposition is doomed to failure. It's too good to be true, altogether too good. I tell you, Good, you're asking too much of these people. You're trying to make water rise higher than its source. You're trying to make them prove superior to their whole history, their environment, their friends, everything they've got."

"People prove superior to those things every day," said Good mildly.

"Not when they have to pay as big a price as you're asking."

"Don't you know there are people who have to be made to pay a big price before they think a thing's worth anything?"

"I say, you know," he said between puffs, "business is the—greatest—game—in the world"

Bassett snorted and bit his cigar clear through. "You're the damnedest, most idiotic optimist I ever hope to see!" he cried. Then they all laughed cheerlessly and relapsed into their moody, waiting silence.

At that very moment, in Jenkins' private office, Roger Wynrod leaned back in his chair and lit another cigarette. He puffed thoughtfully for a moment or two without speaking.

"See if I've got this straight, Joe," he said finally. "As I understand your proposition, it's this: As long as we lie down and play good dog, we're a *good* advertising medium. When we get up and bark at something we think ought to be barked at, then we're a *bad* advertising medium."

"That's one way of expressing it, Roger," laughed Faxon.

Suddenly the young man's quiet, thoughtful demeanour changed. He leaned forward and his jaw hardened. "In other words, when you spend money in advertising with us it's merely a figure of speech. Your advertising appropriation is a sort of slush fund. It's the price you pay for keeping us silent on things you want kept silent. Is that straight?"

"I wouldn't put it just that way. But . . ."

"Well, then, suppose,— just suppose, mind you, — suppose we continue on the line of thought ex-

pressed in this article that irritated you people so much this morning, what then?"

Faxon leaned forward and his fist came down on the desk with a smash. "Wynrod," he said sharply, "Corey & Company has less than six thousand lines of its contract with *The Dispatch* remaining. If you continue to attack us in this way, I can inform you that that contract will not be renewed."

"I see," said Roger quietly.

"Furthermore," added Faxon in the same hard tone, "the contract you now hold with Brooks, Carpenter, Weinstein, LeVigne and all the other members of the department store association, will not be renewed as they expire."

"I see. And if orders are given not to run anything more along this line, what then?"

Faxon smiled. "In that case I can inform you that the pleasant relations that have hitherto existed between *The Dispatch* and the large stores of this city, will continue as before."

"You tempt me, Joe," said Wynrod in what was little more than a whisper, but with an inscrutable look in his eyes. Then he turned and walked to the window. A faint smile of triumph flitted over Faxon's features as he watched the young man's back. Suddenly Wynrod turned around. "Joe," he said, very calmly but very firmly, "you've been

frank with me, and now I'll be the same with you. There are at least half a dozen reasons why I would like to tell you to go to hell, but there's only one necessary. If there was anything needed to stiffen my backbone, it's supplied by the fact that you can come here attempting to give me orders. That won't go, Joe. You came here this morning and insisted on seeing me because you thought you could bully me. That's why you wouldn't talk to Jenkins or Good. But you haven't sized me up right, Joe, and you'd better run back to Corey just as fast as you can and tell him so."

The triumphant smile faded from Faxon's face and it slowly reddened. "That means . . ."

"Anything you choose to make it," said Roger quietly.

Unexpectedly Faxon changed his tactics. With a friendly smile he jumped to his feet. "I say, Roger, you don't understand what you're saying. There's no threatening about it. This is just a plain business talk, pure and simple. We're friends. What's the use of getting up on your ear and talking like that? Do you realise what it'll mean to your paper? You can't afford to do it. I'm not talking to you, personally, you understand. I'm talking to you as a disinterested outsider. I'm giving you a straight tip. I'm trying to save you from making a fool of yourself, don't you understand?"

"I understand perfectly," said Roger. "There's nothing to be said further, is there?"

"Come now," insisted Faxon. "Don't be a clam, Roger. Let's discuss this thing quietly and get to the bottom of it."

"I have nothing further to say," said Roger coldly. "Have you?"

Faxon looked at him helplessly for a moment and when he saw the determination plainly evident in the young man's face and realised that there was no further purpose in discussion, he took his hat. "You're a fine young demigod now, Roger," he sneered. "But wait. Bigger men than you have tried this game before. They've broken — every one of them."

Faxon paused in the doorway as if he would say more, but Roger had already turned his back upon him. With an oath he slammed the door.

"I wonder what he takes me for," murmured Roger. "Thinks I'm a child does he . . . got another think, I guess." Then he went in search of Good and Jenkins.

His sense of isolation and futility seemed to have deserted him utterly. For the first time in his life he felt himself at grips with a man's reality. Disdaining the elevator he skipped up the stairs to Bassett's office with his heart full of a curious exaltation such as he had never experienced before. Like

a boy, but feeling very much a man, he burst into the editor's office.

"Good Lord," he cried, as he saw their sombre countenances, "who's dead?"

"Well, what happened?" asked Jenkins perfunctorily, as if he knew the answer already.

"Oh, we fixed things up beautifully," said Roger, lightly.

"Of course," muttered Bassett under his breath, "I knew you would."

Though Good did not speak, the question was in his expression. Roger saw it, and a light came into his eyes which none of them had ever seen there before.

"I hope you've got some more of that stuff on the girls for to-morrow," he said quietly. "Go after 'em strong."

Then, while the others sat thunderstruck, he drew a cigarette from his case and lighted it, deliberately.

"I say, you know," he said, between puffs, "business is the — greatest — game — in the world."

CHAPTER IX

BURNED BRIDGES

IMRIE's impulsive resignation from St. Viateur's was not treated at all seriously by the vestry. "The natural impetuousness of youth," observed Mr. Corey, not a little virtuously; for Mr. Corey had never been impetuous in his life. The other gentlemen quite agreed with him.

Judge Wolcott was magnanimous. "For my part, I believe in letting bygones be bygones."

Mr. Aishton, who was very thin and dry, giving the curious impression of never having experienced youth, was more explicit. "It's new ideas — unassimilated," he declared. "His years make him restive. A little guidance — that is all — merely guidance!"

Mr. Podgers was the only hesitant one. He was very large and rubicund, with a resonant voice and a gusty dominant manner. He was extremely rich and entirely self made, with the process still somewhat incomplete. Most of his life had been devoted to the single-handed task of besting his fellow men, and, until success, with its automobiles and ten servants and social responsibilities, had arrived, matters

theological had been of absolute unimportance. Now, however, he was quite the most orthodox member of the vestry, which, to be sure, was very desirable in one whose contributions were so large. There was really nothing illogical or surprising in the fact that faith and a set of ancestors came to Mr. Podgers simultaneously with his distinction as a manufacturer of therapeutic alcohol.

"I am not at all in favour," he said with profound conviction, "of permitting even slightly lax doctrine to gain currency. The faith must be kept pure. The Church must be preserved. Otherwise . . ." Mr. Podgers did not deign to indicate what shocking things might eventuate. That the others shared his apprehension was evident from their knitted brows and shaking heads.

But Mr. Podgers, having expressed his opinion and made clear his unimpeachable conservatism, was anxious to get back to business, where conservatism, a little of which, after all, went a very long way, was not so necessary. So he rose.

"I think Mr. Imrie can be informed that his resignation will not be accepted."

"Undoubtedly," echoed Mr. Campbell, who was Mr. Podgers' legal adviser, though he took more advice than he gave. "I think no one questions that." He surveyed the others as if daring anyone to question it. No one did.

"I will talk to him again," said Judge Wolcott. "Like a father," he added benevolently.

The other gentlemen accepted his suggestion with alacrity. Aside from a reluctance at wasting valuable time in such a comparatively unimportant matter, there was a natural distaste for the possibility of unpleasantness. It was quickly decided, therefore, that the Judge should be the vestry's vehicle of "guidance."

Filled with confidence and the best of intentions, he visited the clergyman without delay. Remembering his former discomfiture, he began very tactfully. Imrie listened quietly while he dilated upon the generosity and tolerance of the vestry . . . and then, instead of being grateful and humiliated, as might reasonably have been expected, said that he "would see."

To cover his surprise and irritation, the Judge went all over it again, and this time Imrie "hoped for the best." It was very unsatisfactory. It was with considerable asperity that he advised the young man "not to be impossible."

So far from being properly impressed by the generosity and tolerance of the vestry, and therefore reverting to his former eloquent innocuousness, Imrie improved the following Sunday with a more or less dispassionate analysis of the relations existing between a clergyman and what he had the ex-

treme bad taste to call his "employers." He drew analogies which were extraordinarily tactless and unpleasant, and, as Mrs. Aishton, a very refined woman, said afterward, made her regret that her daughter was present.

Mr. Podgers shook his head, but said nothing. Therefore Mr. Campbell also said nothing. But Judge Wolcott talked a great deal. And the rest of the vestry talked a great deal too, though there was no meeting.

But when on the next Sunday Dr. Imrie cast all decent discretion aside and said things concerning "Hypocrisy" so crudely that even the stupidest of his congregation could understand, and even the most tolerant could not evade; and when that dreadful sermon was followed by one on "Charity" in which absolutely all the bonds of good taste were shattered, Mr. Podgers ceased shaking his head and spoke. Then Mr. Campbell spoke, and a meeting was held.

"He is insane," said Mr. Podgers with a finality which indicated a profound familiarity with all forms of mental aberration.

"Quite," agreed Mr. Campbell, as if it was almost too obvious for comment.

"It is outrageous," declared Mr. Corey with a vindictiveness which contrasted strangely with his white hair and pink cheeks and twinkling little blue

eyes. But it must be remembered that the barbs of the clergyman's inexcusable tactlessness had lodged rather definitely in Mr. Corey's bosom.

A verdict was passed of greater or less severity, according to individual temperament. Mr. Podgers was quite impersonal, but positive, as befitted an upholder of pure faith. Mr. Campbell, for obvious reasons, was even more positive. Mr. Corey was frankly personal. Judge Wolcott was the most regretful. Yet even he could not overlook what he termed Imrie's "ingratitude." He felt that the young man should be "disciplined," though he was vague as to the method. It was finally decided, upon the suggestion of Mr. Campbell, that Mr. Podgers should write the clergyman a note.

Mr. Podgers honestly intended his note to be a sort of premonitory reprimand. But his life had unfitted him for delicate intimations. The words which left him as carefully wrought subtleties reached Imrie, in some occult fashion, as bald commands. The answer was made accordingly. Its effect, of course, was to remove any lingering tolerance on the part of the vestry, and his second resignation was solemnly accepted. The young man was called in, after the decision, in order to hear their "deep regret" that he was "going to leave them." He listened patiently to their assurances of admiration, shook hands punctiliously with each one, handed

over all his accounts and plans, and went back to his room to think about it.

He was not sorry that the break had come. It had been inevitable, he realised, from the moment that Judith's contempt had driven him to put himself to the test. To prove her wrong he had proven himself wrong, and his whole life was upset thereby. The smoothly running engine had stopped short. But characteristically he put all thought of its previous smooth running out of his mind and devoted himself to a consideration of its present inaction.

At this crisis he felt neither need nor desire for friends. None, he realised clearly, could possibly understand or assist. He did not yet entirely understand himself. But he knew that whether he wanted friends or not, he could not well avoid them. The more candid would upbraid him and attempt conciliation: the more tactful would be sympathetic. Both he dreaded. So, after a day of meditation, in which his thoughts merely moved in a circle, he put a few essentials into a bag, stored the rest of his belongings, and disappeared, with a rod and a gun, into the north woods.

There, while his memory in St. Viateur's grew more vague and less fragrant, in contrast to the ductile genius of his successor, and with only an Indian guide for company, he spread out the map of his soul and planned his campaign.

The first possibility was the most obvious. But it was the least attractive. To be true to what he now conceived to be his real self would involve merely a repetition of his experience at St. Viateur's. He was young and comparatively inexperienced, and it never occurred to him that all churches were not alike. The result would be one living after another, all in a constantly descending scale, until he either capitulated or died. Neither prospect appealed to him. Night after night was spent with his pipe and the unwinking stars, but he came no nearer to a decision.

Finally he despaired of finding salvation in solitude, and went back to the city. He established himself in a hotel, preferring to avoid friends and relatives, few of whom, he felt, could possibly sympathise with him.

It is said that every criminal sooner or later visits the scene of his crime. Some such spirit actuated Imrie. The day after his arrival in the city was Sunday, and late in the morning, at an hour when he knew that the congregation would be settling back in resignation preparatory to the sermon, he strolled up to St. Viateur's.

But he did not enter. He preferred to stand across the street, and muse. It was not a beautiful building. Squat, massive, in places heavily ornate, in others dingily bare, it was a mere surface replica

of pristine architecture, at best, a caricature. It was a pretence even if a candid one. It struck him with shocking force that its grim insincerity was symbolic. Within its counterfeit solidity, wood and tin masquerading as stone, machine-made carving strutting in fancied kinship to the inspired craftsmanship of mediæval ornament, dwelt a faith equally false, equally dead. Superficially it had not changed through the centuries: but the soul, the true life had gone from it. As the building was but the grinning skull of art, so the faith within its walls was but the dry and rattling bones of truth.

Those days in the changeless solitude of the forest, where the God in the brown mists and the everlasting purple hills, was too near to be worshipped, where Pan was more divine than Jehovah, had expanded Imrie's soul more than he realised.

A veil he knew then, had covered his eyes. He had seen truth with others' eyes. He had preached a truth which was his only by reflection. Now, for the first time in his life, he was exultantly conscious of seeing things with his own eyes.

St. Viateur's, which had once been so inspiring, was now only pitiful. Even its successor, more vital as a work of art, would still house but a ghost of truth.

He stared with a new wonder at the motor-cars, hurrying past, at a wireless telegraph station in the

distance, thrusting its antennæ into the illimitable skies. How could he have ever been so blind! In all the world — and on it and over it — man was ever seeking truth and finding it. Always, like the wireless, he was pushing his antennæ into uncharted space, never resting content with the achievements of yesterday. It was only in the St. Viateurs' that men still sat mumbling forgotten ritual, praying to shattered idols, rotting in the darkness. Outside, in the sunshine, the world forged ahead, living always in struggle, dying only in content.

His had been death in life, thought Imrie with somthing between a thrill and a shudder. But there were years left to him yet. He threw back his shoulders and set his jaws as he turned homeward.

For the first time he felt that he had a key to the great mystery of life. Paradox vanished, conflict dissolved. It seemed amazingly simple. His call to the ministry was a phenomenon, an aberration of adolescence. He still looked upon it with tenderness, but no longer with seriousness. Beside this new call now sounding bell-like in his heart, that other was but a beating of pans to drive the ghosts away, an empty relic of childhood. To expound creeds was a petty matter of business. He had been no nobler than the barrister who seeks to make right the wrong of his client for a consideration of sundry pieces of silver. He had been a mere tradesman in

the things of the soul. It had seemed enough. Now, crystal-clear, stretched the true road toward which he was summoned. He had dallied long and comfortably in the well-tilled fields of the Past: he was called now to the hard, never-ending conquest of the Future. He would learn the Truth, and it would set him free . . . and then, mayhap, he would set others free.

He was restless that evening, after dinner. The self-imposed solitude of the hotel had begun to be irksome. Forgetting momentarily that it was Sunday, he decided to visit a theatre. But as he ran through the blatant announcements of plays, an inconspicuous little advertisement caught his eye.

Half an hour later, in consequence of what he felt was a veritably inspired accident, he was in a theatre, listening to a sermon by a man who repeatedly assured his audience that he was not a clergyman.

Imrie noticed with surprise that the congregation was largely of men, and the thought struck him with unpleasant force that they were present quite entirely of their own volition. He wondered ironically how many people would attend St. Viateur's if there were no social ends to be achieved.

The man who sat next to him answered some of the questions which rose in his mind. He was about his own age, keen-featured, nervously alert, very fashionably dressed, a type more often found on the

golf links than in church on Sunday mornings. Often, thought Imrie with a kind of shame, he had himself preached against the "agnosticism," the "irreligion," the "spiritual indifference," of such men. But this man's obviously profound attention to a mere *sermon* was a little bewildering.

From him Imrie learned that the speaker was a Jew, formerly a rabbi, who had established a "church" in a distant city, which, though without wealth or machinery of any sort, even to a home of its own, never had a vacant seat, and had become a powerful factor in civic affairs.

The stranger's familiarity with the speaker's history, and his manifest enthusiasm, were as surprising as they were significant, and as Imrie cast his eyes around the hall, he saw many like him. It struck him unpleasantly that men of this sort had not been numerous in his own congregation.

After the service, moved by an impulse which he did not stop to analyse, he made his way to the platform, introduced himself to the speaker, and asked permission to call upon him at his hotel. It was an act very foreign, he realised, to what he had always thought his natural reserve. But the spirit which impelled him was as strong as it was novel. Perhaps, he reflected, it was only necessity. He needed aid. Something told him that Dr. Weis could give it.

The next afternoon he presented himself before the former rabbi, and without hesitation told him everything of the quandary in which he found himself, omitting nothing of the circumstances which had brought it about.

Weis, a compact little man, with snapping black eyes and a combative mouth, listened attentively, never taking his half-smiling gaze from Imrie's face.

"The similarity is — remarkable," he said softly when the recital was finished. Then he added crisply: "Well, young man, what do you propose doing — next?"

"I came to ask you that question," said Imrie briefly.

The little rabbi pursed his lips thoughtfully. "So — you came to ask me. Well, I have answered it. I moved on — yes. But it is a hard answer — oh, quite hard."

He was silent for a moment, snapping his fingernails one against another. Suddenly he looked up.

"Do you wish," he demanded, "to be a preacher?" He paused and bored Imrie with his sharp little eyes. "Do you wish to sway the multitudes with your eloquence? It is applause — yes — you seek? You want *your* church — or the *people's* church . . . what?"

"I'm afraid I don't quite . . ."

"You must understand," said Weis bluntly.

"It's quite essential. You wish to free yourself from dogmatic vestries. Very well — will you substitute for dogmatic vestries, your dogmatic self — yes?" And, when Imrie looked a little crestfallen, he added with a smile, "We're *all* dogmatic, my young friend. To all of us freedom is the right to rule others."

"What is the alternative?"

"There is a plan — I've thought of it often. You want to avoid a bureaucratic Church. You must not founder in the Charybdis of an autocratic one. You have means of your own?"

Imrie nodded.

"That's excellent — for you. But do not finance the church on your money. It must be self-supporting. And don't have 'patrons.' You'll soon have another vestry."

"But the control?"

"Trustees. Build a democratic church. Let the congregation elect the trustees. Let the regular attendants vote. Give out tickets at each meeting and redeem three — five — a dozen, as you determine, for a ballot. Then let your trustees choose the speakers. You may be the chief servant. You must not be master. You may preach occasionally — there must be many — all types — even Jews. To live, it must be free. You must seek men with messages. Anarchists, devils, Catholics, free-ma-

sons, republicans, single-taxers, socialists, aristocrats. As Milton put it, you must let truth battle in a free and open encounter. Then you will have something big, vital, valuable. Is it not so?"

He paused for breath, and Imrie sat silent in amazement at the enthusiasm, the breadth of vision, the fertile ingenuity of the little man. Then the self-consciousness which had shackled him hitherto in the interview, fell away, and he took up the thread where Weis had momentarily laid it down.

Gradually, as proposals were made and rejected and remade, with not a little healthy acrimony, and a very great deal of humour on the part of the older man, which Imrie needed most of all, the idea took shape.

"Ho — yes," cried Weis, as a crushing echo to one of Imrie's most rhetorical flights. "That is fine — yes. Fine words — yes. But words — pouf — what are they? You are young — you wish to reform the world. That is excellent — ambition — yes. But no more. If you succeed beyond your dreams, you will do little, very little. Hitch your wagon to a star — yes. But don't try to ride it. On the ground all the time. Save a soul or two if you can, not neglecting the bodies — and be glad. Most of us cannot save our own. Think of the little bug who makes coral islands. Be a good little bug. Be an earnest, God-fearing bug. Help your fellow

bugs along the narrow way. But don't forget — you are only a bug — yes — only a bug — oh, so trifling!"

It was long after dark when they parted.

"It is a field worth tilling," said the older man as they shook hands. "Your hand is on the plough. Keep your eyes ahead."

"I feel an inspiration," cried Imrie.

"Ho — yes," said Weis dryly. "But that will pass. Then it will be work. But I will help you. I am older. I know — some things. You are a Christian. I am only a Jew. Still — I can help. Ho — yes. I will be with you when the inspiration goes. I am more useful than inspiration. Yes — I will be with you — until you turn back. Then I will not be with you."

"I will not turn back," cried Imrie firmly.

"Yes — I have known young men before — who would not turn back. We shall see — yes."

Imrie felt, as he walked toward the elevator, that there was nothing in the world he would not suffer rather than have those snapping black eyes look upon him with scorn, and hear that crisp voice, with its indefinable accent, say —

"Ho — yes. I have seen — *another* young man."

CHAPTER X

A BLUFF CALLED

FURNISS, the oldest reporter on *The Dispatch,* in point of service, was the one man with whom Good would have liked to part company. But he was so distinctly capable, and there was such an utter absence of tangible reason for his dismissal that he remained in his place, a constant, though impalpable, source of irritation.

He was the only member of the staff whose distrust of Good's motives remained fixed and unconcealed. It was perhaps not wholly his fault. Temperamentally saturnine, years of service covering "police" had sapped his faith in human nature. To him there was no such thing as altruism. At best it was but a cloak to some subtle form of personal exploitation. Just what Good's "game" was, he did not know. But that he had no confidence in his superior was perfectly evident.

Good did everything he could to disarm this hostility, but the only result was to confirm Furniss in the belief that an effort was being made to blind him. Finally Good gave up the task, although he never ceased to regret his subordinate's unconquerable at-

titude. He was so completely without suspicion himself that distrust of himself in others was peculiarly painful.

He and Bassett were in conference one afternoon when Furniss came in.

"I've got a tip," he said directly to Bassett, pointedly ignoring Good. "Maybe a story."

"Shoot," said Bassett, moving his cigar to the other side of his mouth, which was his method of indicating interest.

"The railroads have brought their scrap on the constitutionality of the liability law up to the appellate court. Hennessy of the B. & F. got drunk down state the other night and shot off his face about what was going to happen. He said more than he meant to."

"Well." The cigar went back to its former corner. That signified as near excitement as Bassett ever got.

"According to him they've gotten one of the court, and they're going to get another — up here."

"Yes." Bassett's cigar was only half its former length and disappearing rapidly.

"Hennessy's in town to-day. So's Harper of the M. T., Lloyd, of the Western, and several others."

"Go on." Bassett had begun on a fresh cigar.

"They're all hanging out at the Wellesley —

room 416. If anything stirs, it ought to be there."

"Yes."

"I sized up the place this morning when nobody was there. Also I hired the next room to it. There's a doorway that commands the whole room. It struck me that if we could put a camera covering 416, by way of that doorway, and have another fellow watching through a hole in the wall, the minute they start anything, we'd yank open the door and touch off the flash. I guess we'd have something, what?"

"You're not without brains, Furniss," said Bassett unemotionally.

"Thanks," said Furniss in a similar tone. Neither tone expressed the feelings of its owner.

Bassett never wasted time in praise or blame — until after the matter was concluded. Then he excelled in either capacity. But the present moment called for action, not words.

"You and Good with Sato for the pictures ought to cover it," he said crisply. A curious expression twisted Furniss' lips. It was not a smile. It might rather be called a premonition of one.

"If they pull off anything it'll be to-night," he said, as Bassett turned back from his insistent telephone. "Both Hennessy and Lloyd I happen to know are going South to-morrow."

"I'll save the first column for you," said Bassett

with as near a chuckle as he ever permitted himself.

"It'll break early, if at all," said Furniss. Then he turned insolently to Good. "Pardon me," he said not at all pleasantly, "may I have a word with Bassett, *Mister* Good?"

There was nothing for it, but for Good to leave. But his face paled and his teeth clicked. As the door closed behind him, Bassett swung around in his chair.

"That was a hell of a thing to do," he snapped. "If he doesn't tie a can to you, I'll do it myself. Who the devil do you think you are, anyway?"

Furniss only laughed. "Better ask that four-flusher who *he* is. His game's going up in smoke to-night, or I miss my guess. I'll show him up — you watch."

Bassett took the cigar out of his mouth and laid it on the desk.

"What's the answer?"

Furniss' eyes narrowed. "Who's the only judge of the appellate court in this town?"

Bassett hummed softly. "The hell you say!"

"Exactly. Now you can figure it out. What do you think the virtuous Good will do when he finds out? Want a double-leaded three column head, won't he,— with pictures?" Furniss sneered and rolled a cigarette. Bassett looked out of the window and whistled thoughtfully.

"This is just an ordinary newspaper," said Furniss with significance, as he went out. Bassett did not turn around. He remained silent and motionless for a long time. The pile of papers on his desk grew higher and higher, but he paid no heed. The telephone rang and rang unanswered. He still sat staring into vacancy, the slow movement of his jaws as they chewed the cigar, the only sign of life.

One of the office boys expressed it perhaps as well as it could be expressed.

"Gee," he whispered to his companions, "the Old Man's awful tired." Then the buzzer rang, and the boy who answered it concluded that it was a short-lived weariness, or that he had been sadly misinformed.

In the meantime Good had gone to his own office. He was puzzled by the curious behaviour of Furniss and vaguely apprehensive. The atmosphere was tense: it bade fair to be a stormy night. He was not given to credence in signs and portents, but the sullen muttering of the thunder and the frequent flashes of lightning in the darkening sky filled him with inexplicable dread. He lit his pipe and tried to tell himself that it was merely a case of nerves, aggravated by the weather. But the attempt was a failure. Then the door opened and Roger Wynrod entered, his face such a picture of health and con-

tentment that even the hardiest devils could tarry no longer in the room.

"I've been hunting you all day," he cried. "I've got news."

"A beat?"

"Hardly," he laughed. "All the papers have it. That ought to give you a clue. Can't you guess?"

"Not possibly."

"Well — she'll have me."

"Obviously you're imparting news of great moment," said Good severely. "I've seldom seen you look more completely idiotic. But I don't get you."

"Why, you wooden-head — Molly Wolcott — me — we're engaged!"

"Oh — I thought you had *news*. That's as stale as last year's election." Good laughed as he bantered, but the light shining in his eyes showed the tenderness of his feeling for the younger man. "You're a lucky kid."

"Rather. But I earned it. She's had me over the hurdles more than once. I never had a swelled head with Molly in the neighbourhood. She always swore I'd never do."

"What made her change?"

"No idea. Woman's way, I guess."

Good put his hand on Roger's shoulder, and his voice softened. "Poppycock," he said slowly. "She never changed. She was only waiting —"

"What for?"

"For you to grow up. You've been growing fast of late, my boy. The way you've taken hold here — it's been splendid. It's tickled your sister beyond words. And I guess — it's tickled someone else, eh?"

"I guess you're about right," he said seriously. "I never was much of a fellow. But I never realised what a useless ass I was until I tried being useful. I came in here more on a lark than anything else. I never dreamed what a mess I could make of things. I thought I was pretty much of a man. I was going to look the ship over and then take up quarters on the bridge. I was going to give you and sis orders in no time. But it didn't take long to wake up. Why, I'm not even a decently capable boy. I tell you, Good, this thing has taught me — lots. It's been mighty hard — harder than you have any idea of. I've wanted to lie down and quit lots of times. Why, I —"

"Why didn't you?" asked Good quietly.

"Well — there was Molly. I knew it was good-bye Roger if I did. If there's one thing she hates, it's a yellow streak. Why, she —"

"That wasn't the only reason, was it?" Good's eyes were very bright and keen. For a moment Roger looked puzzled. Then he hung his head and smiled.

"No — it wasn't. I — oh, hang it — I don't want to seem a conceited ass — but — well — I'm not much for the yellow myself. I've never been a quitter in useless things — and — and — well, I just couldn't quit on this job. I just had to go through with it. Don't you understand?"

"Yes — I understand." Good smiled, very tenderly.

"There's one thing more. I . . ." Roger hesitated, and reddened slightly. "I don't know just how to put it into words, but I want to tell you that I feel I owe Molly and oh — everything — to you. I — oh, hang it — I — I . . ." He stammered and was silent, but he gripped Good's hand again and held it fast.

The older man's eyes winked with suspicious rapidity, and he swallowed several times before he spoke. When he did there was a little tremble in his voice.

"We Anglo-Saxons," he began. Then his voice broke, and he added in a hurried whisper, "We can't talk — such fools . . ."

But as they held each other's hands and looked into each other's eyes, both knew that the other understood.

Then Furniss and the Japanese photographer came in, and the tension snapped. Roger, who shared Good's dislike for the reporter, having even

in private characterised him as a "buzzard," quickly withdrew, and Good was left to complete the details of the evening's work.

Furniss plunged into the business at hand, without preliminaries.

"There are two doors between our room and 416. I'll keep watch through the keyhole of one, and when I see anything and give the word, you pull open the other and Sato snaps the flash —"

"But," interposed Good, "suppose something happens — and happens in another part of the room. The camera will have to be far enough away to give clearance for the door, and then it won't cover much —"

"Perhaps you'd like to have them stage the show outdoors and let us film it for the movies," said Furniss sarcastically. The photographer laughed furtively but Good affected not to hear him.

The reporter seemed to regret his insolence a little. "It's only a hundred to one shot, of course," he explained more amicably. "Nothing may happen. It may happen where we can't get it. We can only hope for the best. But there's a table in the centre, and the light's in the centre, and if anything happens that's the most likely place for it. If we get it we get it, and if we don't, we don't, that's all."

"I see," said Good, admiring, in spite of himself,

the undeniable ability of the man, however displeasing his personality.

"One thing more," continued Furniss. "The minute they hear the flash they'll break for it. Most of 'em will run for the hall, because they're cowards and fools. But Hennessy's neither one nor the other, and he'll make straight for us. He's a big guy and ready for rough work. Furthermore he's keen. He'll see our game right off. Now while Sato and I make a getaway, it'll be up to you to stop Hennessy. I say you, because you're bigger than I am. Can you use your hands — fight?"

"I have."

"I thought so. Well, I'd suggest your pasting him if you can, before he pastes you, and then beating it, too."

"How will you leave the hotel?"

"Glad you asked that. When you leave, don't go for the elevators, but take the stairs. On the third floor you'll find the freight elevator waiting for you. Now, is there anything else?"

The photographer had a few questions to ask, and Good studied Furniss while he answered them. The little reporter was like an animal on the trail of its prey. His thin nostrils contracted and expanded as he talked, and there was a lithe, nervous tenseness about every feature of his face. Good thought with

half a shudder that he would not care to have Furniss on his trail. And yet, even as the thought struck him, he was conscious of the little man's eyes upon him, boring him through, as if that were precisely what he was about. He tried to rid himself of the absurd notion, but it persisted. One of the characteristics of Furniss was his complete impersonality. He might, almost unaided, devote months of single-handed, implacable effort, as in the famous Varney case, to tracking down and placing a whole company of men in the penitentiary; but never with the slightest hint of vindictiveness. He sought out corruption and punished its authors always for the solitary reason that thereby he made news. He was like the bloodhound, which pursues its quarry as long as it has breath in its body — only to overwhelm it with caresses.

But now, Good fancied, the impersonal note was gone. It seemed to him, why, he could not say, that Furniss had a purpose other than to unearth news. There seemed more mastiff than bloodhound in him, more lust for blood than love of the chase. Again and again he told himself how silly it was, but he could not rid himself of the suggestion that *he* was the goal at which the reporter aimed.

By eight o'clock the three had begun their vigil. At intervals Furniss fixed his eye to the keyhole,

turning to stare, with what Good thought a very slightly concealed malevolence, at himself. The air was surcharged with expectancy.

Good smoked his pipe and wondered what it all meant. The photographer lit one cigarette on the end of another, but otherwise appeared as indifferent as a graven image. Increasingly Furniss kept his eye to the keyhole. Suddenly a jerk of his arm brought the others to attention. Good emptied his pipe and took up his position by the other door. The photographer crushed out his cigarette on his heel and examined, for the hundredth time, the mechanism of his flash pistol.

For a little while they stood tense and watchful, but when nothing happened, they relaxed a trifle. The photographer lit another cigarette. Good sat down, but at a glare from the reporter, stood up again. The muffled sound of voices came to them from the other room, occasionally rising in pitch, as if in argument, though no words could be distinguished.

They remained thus for what seemed an eternity. Once Good looked at his watch. It was half past nine. The voices still rose and fell on the other side of the door. Once Sato yawned, and changed his flash pistol from one hand to the other. Suddenly Furniss turned from the keyhole, his eyes ablaze, and his lips silently formed the warning.

The air was surcharged with expectancy

Good, his heart thumping uncontrollably, the sense of something terrible impending, more acute than ever, put his hand on the doorknob. The photographer fingered his shutter release. . . .

Good never afterward could tell exactly how it all happened. He never could see in his mind's eye the signal from Furniss. Yet he must have seen it, else the door would never have been opened.

All he knew at the moment, and all he could ever remember, was a sudden blinding flash of light, with a dull roar, and he was staring past a roomful of men straight into the eyes of — Judge Wolcott. They were wide with recognition and helpless terror.

Then he was conscious of a rush of scurrying feet, and a large man pushing over a chair in front — making for him.

It flashed over him that this was Hennessy, acting as if the whole thing had been planned and rehearsed. He laughed unconsciously, as if in a dream. It *had* been rehearsed. As the big man reached the threshold, his eyes flaming, his nostrils dilated, his jaw open, like some mad bull, Good's arm straightened mechanically. The blazing eyes and red nostrils vanished, and his knuckles hurt him vaguely. Then the lights went out in the other room, and he made for the door. He felt sick to his stomach when he reached the street, and some-

thing seemed to press on his temples till he wanted to scream.

But the horrible feeling of dread had vanished. He knew now what he had feared. And he understood the light in Furniss' eyes. For a moment he stood on the street-corner, swaying like a drunken man, before his shoulders straightened and his jaw set, and he made for a taxi.

The office was filled with suppressed excitement when he reached it. Bassett was chewing one of his interminable cigars, but the gleam in his eyes betokened the fires in his soul. Bassett wanted very much to get on the table and howl, but had anyone even so much as suspected that he was not ice, he would never have recovered from the humiliation.

"Great stuff," he said with exaggerated passiveness. "First galleys will be up soon. Furniss had most of the story written before he pulled the thing off. Great lad, Furniss."

But Good, his face grey, the skin, like old parchment, drawn tight to bursting over his high cheek bones, said never a word. He sank into a chair, staring straight before him.

"But the picture's the thing," went on Bassett, in a tone he might have employed in discussing a press-drive. "It ought to set this town by the ears. Wolcott's a big fish to land. Church pillar and all

that. Wonder what made him fall. Never had anything on him before. Shouldn't wonder if he shot himself," he added, quite indifferently.

Presently a boy brought in the first batch of proofs. Bassett leaped to his desk and buried himself in them. As his pencil moved, fragmentary sentences slipped from his mouth. "Great stuff!" —"Holy Eliza, what a shock to the silk-stockings!" —"St. Viateur's'll need a new vestryman."—"Furniss — you're a bear!"—

Good rose and read listlessly over his shoulder. Then he fell to pacing slowly back and forth.

"Plate developed?" he asked finally, in a forced, dead tone.

"Bully — bully —" muttered Bassett. "What? The plate — oh — guess so. Why?"

"I want it."

Bassett turned to his telephone. In a few moments a boy arrived with the negative in his hand. The editor reached for it, but Good anticipated him. He took the plate and stood staring at it stupidly.

In the meantime Furniss had entered.

"It's all in," he said, with a heavy sigh. "Not bad — eh?"

"Best ever," said Bassett shortly. "You're some kid, Furniss." The reporter smiled happily. He wanted no more. Then he turned to Good, and

studied him narrowly. But the tall man, his eyes still fixed on the plate, and his face drawn as if in physical pain, took no notice of him.

There was silence in the room, broken only by the rustle as Bassett mulled over the proofs.

Then there was a crash. The negative lay on the desk . . . in fragments.

"Good God!" Furniss' hand was poised in mid-air, as if he had been turned to stone. Bassett's eyes were staring like a madman's.

Good leaned over and picking up the proofs on the desk, fell to tearing them slowly to bits. At each tear a spasm of pain crossed Furniss' face. But he remained transfixed.

"I guess — we won't — run this," said Good dully, as if speaking to himself.

The words brought Bassett to life. Like an avalanche, prayers, threats, entreaties, oaths, poured from his lips. He stormed up and down the office, his fists clenched, his clothes awry, his hair tousled. Suddenly he subsided, and in a tone like a girl's, and with a manner which one might use with insanity, he made his intreaties. Then, as suddenly, he burst into frenzy again.

Good, staring straight before him, still tearing the proofs into shreds, made no sign.

Furniss was silent too. He stared at Good unwinking, as lifeless as if carved from ivory, but with

such a look of horror in his face as even Bassett, well-nigh mad with surprise and disappointment, never afterwards forgot. Then, without warning, the look of horror faded. He laughed — bitterly, but easily.

"You see, Bassett — I told you — it's just an ordinary newspaper." He laughed again. The sound sent a shiver down Good's spine. He seemed to hear it echoing and re-echoing in his ears as Furniss went out, the door slamming behind him.

When he had gone, Good turned and faced Bassett, who ceased alike to storm and to plead. The editor was sitting in his chair, chewing his cigar, already regretting that he had so far lost control of himself.

"You don't understand, do you?" asked Good with ineffable sadness in his voice.

"Yes," said Bassett, half bitterly, half sadly, "I understand."

The tall man smiled — if the pitiful, hopeless expression that came into his face could be called a smile, and put his hand on the other's shoulder.

"No," he said softly, "you don't."

As he went quietly out, from what seemed like a death-chamber, and felt Bassett's hard eyes following him, he knew that in truth something very precious had died that night.

In his own office he sat with his head in his hands.

" I'm not a machine — I'm only a man," he repeated over and over again, until he heard the refrain without speaking. " If I could only make them understand." His voice was helpless. He knew that he only half understood himself.

How long he sat thus puzzling the mystery of his own nature, he never knew. But presently he became aware that he was not alone. The room was in only partial darkness, a street lamp filling it with a sickly glow. He raised his eyes, and for a second time that night, met those of Judge Wolcott. But they were different. The sharp terror had given place to heavy pain.

" Hello," said Good, as if this was quite what he had expected.

" Mr. Good, I . . ." The Judge's voice was a pitiful travesty of its former masterful assurance. Never before had the Judge been obliged so to humble himself. " I don't know what I can say — only — I — I . . ."

" You want mercy," said Good brutally. He marvelled at the phrase. That was not what he had meant to say. It seemed to come from lips quite beyond his control.

" Not for myself." The old man's tone was inexpressibly sad, yet not without a certain dignity. " There are my daughters. I — I — would spare them."

"Belated, eh — a bit, don't you think?" Again Good was amazed at his cruelty. He seemed to be in the grasp of devils.

The Judge hung his head. "I don't know what to say," he sighed brokenly. "I only hoped —"

"That you could come snivelling to me and beg off, for the sake of your daughters, eh? Well — look here, my friend. You've given us the greatest scoop of the year." Good's tone was as hard as adamant, though there were tears in his heart. "To save your daughters from disgrace, you'd have us give up the thing we live for."

"I know — I know — but is it so much?"

"It's everything. But let that pass. Here's a thing that counts. Has it occurred to you what would happen to *me* if I listened to you?"

"To you?"

"Yes. If I kill this story, my work here ends. By the standards of those about me I'd be a traitor. I've preached truth without fear or favour — you understand — without fear or favour. I've fought pull with everything I've got. And now you'd have me . . . man, it's a test — can't you see — it's a test!" Good's voice changed suddenly. From the court, passing sentence, he had become the condemned, pleading for clemency.

The old man drew himself up. "I see. I did not — wholly understand. It is — inevitable."

There was indescribable pathos in the resignation with which he spoke. "It is inevitable," he repeated softly. Then he turned to go.

"Why don't you see Wynrod?" asked Good with sudden harshness.

The other man laughed mirthlessly. "He is the one person from whom I'd keep — this," he said shortly. "He — he — cares for me — now . . ."

Good's voice changed again, and grew soft. "Judge," he asked quietly, almost indifferently, "what caused it all?"

The old man's fine white head fell on his chest, and Good felt glad, for him, in his bitter shame, that it was dark.

"I had rather not speak of that," he said wearily. "What is done is done." He rose to go. Good waited until his hand was on the doorknob.

"Wait," he whispered chokingly. His voice was lifeless. "I was joking, you know. It's all right. It's all right," he repeated, as if the words were forced from him. "The story's dead."

"I don't understand . . ."

"The story's killed, I tell you. You can read to-morrow's *Dispatch* without a tremble."

"You mean . . . ?" The old man was clutching at his collar as if it hurt him. "You mean . . . ?"

"For the third time — the story's dead."

"Did Roger — ?"

"He knows nothing about it."

"Then you — it *was* you?"

"Yes — it was I." The Judge never forgot the unutterable hopelessness of Good's tone as those four words crept slowly from him.

"How can I ever . . ." The old man made for Good, his hand outstretched. But the latter recoiled.

"I'd rather you wouldn't. You owe me — nothing."

The Judge hesitated, not knowing what to do or say. Good was the first to speak, a subtle note in his voice, not easy to analyse.

"That liability law," he said abruptly. "It's constitutional?"

"I — er — think so."

"You're certain of it?" Good's voice had suddenly become like steel, and the old man seemed to grow visibly smaller before the keen eyes penetrating to the innermost recesses of his soul.

"Yes — I — I'm quite sure of it."

"Your mind is fully made up, of course." The meaning behind the words was unmistakable. The Judge took his cue at once.

"Absolutely."

"Good night," said Good.

"But I —" The Judge hesitated.

" Good night," repeated the tall man with a finality which brooked no question.

The old man stood embarrassedly looking at him for a moment. Then he went out, softly closing the door behind him.

Good sat staring after him, a crooked little smile twisting his lips, his body looking oddly shrunken and weak.

And there he sat unmoving, until he heard the rumble of the trucks in the street below and knew that the first edition was on its way to the world. Then he went out.

From his office he went down to the sub-basement, where the presses ground spruce forests into newspapers. For a little while he stood watching the great machines with the virgin white rolling smoothly through them like threads in a loom. He had never lost his fascination for this alchemy of power, and now, at his darkest hour, the wonder of it filled him as never before, and the roaring song seemed the sweetest sound he had ever heard.

He was buried in his dream and the man in overalls who approached him seemed but a corporeal manifestation of an idea. When he spoke it was not to a man, but to a wizard who bore the keys of truth. His soul whispered to the soul of the machines. His words stumbled far behind.

" What a marvel! What power! What magic!

What possibilities unthought of . . . oh, the press . . ."

But it was only a pressman, rather more than usually tired, who answered.

" Yes, she's a pretty good old girl. But say, you oughta see the new tubular duplex they're gettin' out! It's got this skinned a mile. Why say . . ."

Good's revery faded. Reality obtruded. This poor Prometheus, dabbling boastfully with the fire of the gods — ah, well . . . who that read *The Dispatch* on the morrow, with his toast and coffee, would know the magic, the wonder, the poetry in his hands? Would it be ought but a newspaper to a single one? Blind world!

" What drives the presses? " he asked dreamily.

" Well, this one has a G. E. polyphase, monitor control, with . . ." began the pressman. But the words fell on empty air. The other man had gone.

CHAPTER XI

"TEARS . . . AND THEN ICE"

THE next afternoon Good got together an account of his stewardship and went to see Judith, who was at Braeburn. He took the four o'clock train.

Several stations out, a roughly dressed man entered the car and took the seat next to him. Presently he asked for a match, and with that as an opening, requested what, with delicate euphemism, he characterised as a "loan" of a pipeful of tobacco.

"When were you discharged?" asked Good quietly, as he handed over his pouch. The man changed colour and seemed to shrink visibly into the corner of his seat.

"Who the . . . I haven't been discharged," he stammered.

"Deserter, then?"

"I don't get ye."

"What's the use of stalling," said Good. "I've served myself."

The man looked over his shoulder furtively. "How did ye know?" he whispered.

"It takes a long time to lose that set to your shoulders, my friend."

"Well — what ye goin' to do about it?" The question was put more with resignation than defiance.

Good raised his eyebrows. "Do about it? Why — what is there to do?"

"There's a bounty up," muttered the deserter savagely.

"Of course — but what of it?"

"Aw, cut that stuff! Call the con and cash in. Might as well be now as later." The words were uttered wearily, as if the speaker's strength were at a low ebb. "I'm sick o' chasin' round an' starvin'. At least I'll get my belly full in stir. Nothin' to this game. I been on the jump ever since I . . . left. I knew one o' you dicks 'd get me some time. Go on — make the pinch."

"You think I'm a dick?"

"Well — ain't ye?"

"Hardly."

"Hell — I thought you was." There was no particular regret in the man's voice. He seemed to have lost any very keen interest in what fate might do with him further.

"Out of work?" asked Good, after a pause.

"Most o' the time. Can't stay in one place long."

"Where you bound for now?"

"Country. Got a chance on a farm."

"That's the safest place. Got any money?"

"Two bits. I'm flush to-day."

"Here's two more. Four's luck."

The man eyed his benefactor narrowly. "Say," he ventured, "you look's if you was kind o' up against it yerself."

"More or less," said Good shortly. A moment later Braeburn was reached, and he rose.

"Here's luck, bo," said the deserter. "Got a job?"

Good's only reply was a faint smile. But it was such a curious smile that the other man thought about it for a long time afterward. He concluded that its owner had no job. He almost regretted that he had accepted the quarter.

It was well on in November, though summer seemed to have returned for a fleeting visit. But in spite of the warmth Good's heart was heavy as he trudged up the winding road, where death had almost overtaken him, and where the happiest chapter of his life had begun. He almost wished he were going again to interview the rich Miss Wynrod for *The Workman's World.*

But although, for the most part, his gaze was introspective, he was not wholly blind to the splendour of the world about him. Beside the road the oaks

and maples seemed to bow and scrape to one another, garbed, like the Assyrian, in purple and gold, with here and there a flash of poignant scarlet. The distant hills, glowing warmly in the soft haze, were great strips of Scotch tweed. Now and again, borne on the breeze, came the pungent odour of burning leaves.

He halted, more than once, to draw a long breath and marvel at the glories of the scene. It was peaceful but not quiet. The fallen leaves rustled incessantly, and the squirrels, not at all deceived by this pretence of summer, went busily on with their preparations for what was coming, chattering volubly the while. The sound of a whistle drifted faintly from the distant railroad, that man and his works should not be forgotten, even here.

Good's clouded brow cleared, and the heaviness dropped from his heart. He had come from the clamorous city, with its strife, its falsities, its bitter disappointments; and presently he would return. But now, for one brief moment, in the midst of sweet, mysterious odours, and sweeter memories, he was very happy.

He kicked the leaves around his feet exultantly, like a boy, and tried to persuade every squirrel he saw to come and taste the mythical peanut he held in his fingers. The squirrels were wary, but a little dog limped up to him wagging a fragmentary tail

and whining faintly. He stopped to analyse the whine, and as a result a troublesome burr ceased longer to trouble. The animal followed him the rest of the way to the Wynrod house.

The man turned at the gate. "Good-bye, friend," he said gravely. The dog wagged his whole body and barked twice. It was indisputable that he understood.

Good found Judith waiting for him in the library. As they shook hands he thought that he had never seen so lovely a creature. She was dressed in a riding costume of hunter green, which toned perfectly with the autumnal warmth of her skin. There was a wine-like sparkle in her eyes and her teeth gleamed in an unaffected smile as she greeted him. Apparently his presence was pleasing to her. But as he caught a glimpse of their reflections in the mirrow over the fireplace, he wondered, a little dismally, how that were possible. She was so fresh and sound and glowing, and yet, withal, so dainty, so delicate, so thoroughly feminine: while he . . . never, he thought, had he realised quite how awkward and grotesque a thing he was. The mirror was brutally candid. Beside her face, with its colouring of frost-ripened apple, his own stared back, telling its sordid tale of stuffy rooms and gas-light and greasy food and lack of exercise. With its seams and wrinkles it looked like a coat of white

paint, yellowed and broken by over-long exposure to the elements. He was suddenly conscious that his suit was very old and ill-fitting, and that his hair needed cutting badly. For the first time in his life he suffered a pang of regret that the configuration of his neck prevented his wearing a collar which fit him.

As he looked down at her hand in his, smooth, well-formed, the fingers tapering delicately, yet with a flow of muscle under the integument revealing bridle-strength — for horse or man — he sighed. His own seemed so huge and formless, with its mountainous purple veins, its coarse black hair, like forests, and the spatulate nails — clumsy, broken, yellow where hers were pink . . . hastily his hand sought his pocket.

"Well," she said, when the silence threatened to become embarrassing, "what's the news from the scene of action?"

He drew a bulky envelope from his coat, and tried to forget her physical presence. But to the familiar smell of burning leaves clung a faint scent of jaqueminot. His hand trembled a little as he turned the pages of the documents.

"You'll be disappointed," he whispered huskily.

"Why?"

"It's a poor showing."

"Wasn't that to be expected?"

"In a way, yes, but . . ."

"Is it as bad as it might be?"

"Well, no, but . . ."

"Tell me about it, then." She had seated herself and was busy with the tea things which a maid had brought in. Good found it necessary to read words several times before he caught their meaning. It was difficult to keep his eyes upon the paper.

"Shall I give the inventory first?" he asked.

"Oh, don't bother with the details. I can read all that later. Just give a summary — and tell me what it all means."

He cleared his throat. "Well — advertising fell off fast at first. Then some of it came back. Mostly small stuff, though. The big stores have never come back. And all the heavy advertisers, like the telephone and the electric light companies, seem gone for good. Advertising revenue has been cut in half — maybe a little more."

"But you expected that."

"Oh, yes. It's quite natural. We've hammered the telephone company pretty hard on its purchase of the independents. And of course you know what we did to the department stores. Oh, I knew we'd lose advertising. But the circulation — that's been more disappointing."

"Has it fallen off?"

"Pretty badly. I knew we'd lose at first. But

I thought we'd gain later. We haven't, though — not as we should. People don't seem to want the truth — unless it's sensational. They want excitement and partisanship. Sometimes I think they'd rather be lied to than not. And they don't like to hear so much about misery and evil. We expose too much. We're unpleasant. They'd rather ignore unpleasant things. Of course I knew your class would hate us and fight us — and they have. But the ordinary people — I felt sure — I thought — they'd support us. But they haven't — not as they should. It hurts . . . I can't tell you how much!" His voice broke, and he looked pathetically old and worn. The tears came into Judith's eyes as she recalled the enthusiasm with which he had first broached the plan of purchasing *The Dispatch.*

"I'm disappointed, too," she said slowly, after a pause. He recoiled as if she had struck him.

"Not in the paper — in you," she added hastily, seeing the pain in his eyes. "I thought your faith was stronger. Have you forgotten what you said to me —'serve, not for them, for yourself'? Is it popularity you're after? Has truth ever been popular?"

"A newspaper, to succeed, must be popular," he murmured.

"Did you persuade me to buy *The Dispatch* in order to be successful? Come, Mr. Good, this is

unlike you. Didn't you warn me I would lose friends as well as money? Well — I have. Didn't you show me quite candidly that whatever success might come would be very small? You hated charity because it was only temporary and expedient. But charity is popular, and the results show. Truly I am surprised at you." She paused, waiting, but Good only sighed.

"Come, if you were in my place — if *you* owned *The Dispatch* — would you be down like this?"

She was surprised and taken aback a little at his reply. "Yes," he said heavily, "I would." She was not to understand his meaning for a long time.

She laughed, not because she was amused, but because she could think of nothing to say. The sound seemed to brighten him a little.

"Of course you understand," he said, "that when I speak of the failure of *The Dispatch* I mean comparative failure. It's losing now . . . but not so much as it lost at first. Next year it should do better. I don't mean that it will be profitable. I doubt if you'll ever take out much more than you put in. Still . . ."

"Mr. Good," she interrupted severely, "you annoy me. Here you are talking about *profit*. Did you ever talk profit before? Did I go into it for profit? Has any of the money I've given to the church ever paid any dividends? Is charity prof-

itable? You're utterly absurd. Let's have no more of this sorry pessimism. Profit! Really, you amaze me."

"You amaze me more," said Good with a quizzical smile. Suddenly his voice changed and his eyes closed. "The whole problem of life," he murmured dreamily, "is to reconcile the soul and the body. Part of us is kin to the angels. We get very near to heaven, sometimes. We all have our moments of strength. We leave the clay — but we fall back. Hell is only the burden of flesh. Ah well — I've had my moment. Some day I may have another. Perhaps here. Perhaps not. Perhaps what I have seen of heaven will come to someone else. Maybe that's the true reincarnation. We die and our light goes out. Perhaps we weaken and put it out ourselves. But maybe it does not really go out at all. Who knows? It may have been taken from us and placed in fresh hands — and so, on and on, through struggle and failure, and success and treachery and cowardice and courage . . . until the great purpose of it all is realised. We're only woodpeckers on a tree. And Igdrasil is mighty. Some peck more, some peck less — none does much. But perhaps it's only how we peck that counts. Maybe so — maybe so . . ."

His voice died away and he covered his face with his hands. It seemed to Judith that a veil had been

momentarily raised, permitting a glimpse into a heart which was bruised and weary, but in which courage — the courage which has known defeat, the noblest of all — still reigned. The walls of the familiar room faded into illimitable distance, the breeze rustling the leaves outside sank suddenly, and out of the silence came a sweet, mysterious song filling her heart with exaltation, a sense of grace which hurt.

Then the light declined quickly, and there was a crimson glow in the west, gradually purpling.

"I must go," he said abruptly. "It's late."

"Oh — won't you stay to dinner?"

"No."

His negative was too final for her to press that topic further. She chose another.

"Let's see the sunset first. We may have no more days like this."

"I am quite sure of that." The words were murmured under his breath. They seemed to Judith, still under the mysterious spell which had been cast about her, to be fraught with solemn significance. Suddenly she realised that it was cold. She shivered even when she had donned her coat.

Quite silently they walked into the garden, and without either speaking, went straight to the spot where their lines of life had first crossed. He looked about him, a twisted little smile on his lips.

"Here is where Roger wanted to have me thrown out," he said thoughtfully. "Shouldn't wonder if he regretted now that he didn't."

"Roger cares for you more than any other man in the world," she cried. There was a catch in her voice, why, she did not know. "You've done wonders — you've made that boy a man. You're his mainstay. I can't ever . . ." She attributed the lump which persisted in rising in her throat to her affection for her brother. That is, she tried to attribute it to that.

"I'm his mainstay no longer," he corrected her gravely. "I did what I could for him. Now it's up to Molly. But her task is easy. The boy's under his own steam now."

"You think so?" The pride and joy in her eyes were unmistakable. But there was something else there which one less obtuse than Good would have seen even more clearly.

"No question about it. He took hold from the start. He's proved his ability. He's the actual business head of the organisation now — truly he is. When Jenkins left, Roger stepped right into his place and the ranks never wavered. The lad's been slow in finding himself — no doubt of that. But that's all over. His girl's wise — she knows. The world will know it soon, too. Why, if I wasn't there to prevent it, he'd make *The Dispatch* into a money-

maker in no time!" The last words were said with a twinkle in his eyes, but it seemed to Judith that a certain sadness lay behind the jest.

"I'm so glad," she cried. "He's meant so much to me."

"Doesn't he now?" he smiled.

"Of course. But I don't see much of him now. He's at the Wolcotts' constantly. He's almost as fond of the Judge, you know, as he is of Molly."

"So I've heard," said Good with a curious little laugh which she did not understand.

"He has good stuff in him — and bad. I never knew which would triumph."

"And you never will," he said simply. "He's human, you know. But the odds are on your side now."

"I'm so glad — so glad — and so grateful . . ."

They were silent again. Suddenly the darkness fell, blotting out everything around them. Lights began to twinkle through the trees. A dog barked mournfully. It was much colder. As the daylight passed, the world passed with it. They were isolated, Judith's beauty and her home and the polish of her finger-nails as buried in oblivion as the gaunt ugliness of the man beside her. All the horde of little things, which in the day mattered so much, now seemed to matter not at all. They stood, naked of all trappings, soul to soul.

"I've got to go," muttered Good in a constrained, choked voice. "It's late." But he made no move. They continued to stare at each other.

"It's turning cold," she said — because she had to say something.

The man sighed heavily. "There will be no more days like this," he said, more to himself than to her.

"What do you mean?" She was conscious of a look in his eyes and a sound in his voice which she had never experienced before.

"You know well what I mean!" Without warning his lean hand shot out and seized hers with a grasp which almost made her wince. "You know well that I love you, Judith Wynrod." The words rushed through his clenched teeth and struck her ears like bullets. "You know it well," he added fiercely. She stood very still, looking into eyes which smouldered before her like banked fires.

"You're hurting my hand," she whispered. Instantly she wished she had not said that.

His voice changed. "I'm sorry," he said softly. "I wasn't thinking — of your hand." Slowly she withdrew her fingers from his. He made no move to retake them. For a little while he was silent. When he spoke again his tone was different. The fierceness had departed. Instead, it was wistful, and it struck her that he was repeating something

which he had memorised a long time ago. She had a curious feeling that he would be saying it even if she were not there to listen. The words came slowly, as if each one had been weighed and tested.

"I've always been a lonely chap. I never had any friends — except dogs and drunks and beggars and bad boys. Women always laughed at me. I was too sentimental. Men shouldn't be that, you know. After Zbysko went out there wasn't anybody. About all I had — more than other men — was imagination. When I went down, that made me go further than most. There were times . . . I'm not ashamed nor sorry . . . they just happened — like starvation. Some men are decent because they have to get on. I couldn't seem to get on. For a while I gave up trying. Imagination and an empty stomach and no one to care . . . well, life never had much in it for me — until I knew you. You were the first good woman who had ever remembered me from one day to another. I fancied . . . I mattered to you. I liked to think that I was a part of your life — even such a small part. It was gratitude at first. Then it grew and grew until — you see what a curse imagination can be! If I'd been an ordinary, sensible person, I'd never have let myself go. But I dallied with the idea. I gave myself up to it. And then it got too strong for me. I don't know why I burst out like this to-day. I

should have kept it to myself. There was no need for you to know. I was a fool . . . oh, a dreadful fool!" He sighed heavily and was silent.

"I never dreamed . . ." she breathed.

"That's not true," he said gravely. "You thought of it often. You're too wise not to. I could see it in your eyes. You didn't want to — you had to. You're a woman."

"Mr. Good, I can't tell you how much this means to me. I do care for you . . . very much — more — more —" She hesitated and stopped. The inadequacy and stiffness of her words were distressingly evident. Even in the dusk she could see the dull pain in his eyes. They had the expression of some wounded, helpless animal.

"Please don't," he begged. "I understand. When I hurt your hand . . . that was enough. It's quite impossible, of course." Never, to the end of her days, would she forget the dreary hopelessness in his voice, the bent shoulders, the hand uplifted in deprecation. She wanted to throw her arms about him, as she would with Roger. Something held her — she could not move. The tears blinded her . . .

"But you didn't finish," he shot at her suddenly. "More — more — than any other man . . . was that what you were going to say?"

And when she made no reply, he laughed, a little bitterly, a little tenderly — quite mirthlessly.

"I thought not. Well . . . I used to hate him. I used to hate him very much — for other reasons, too. But he's not the man now that he was. He's been through the fire. He's better metal now. He's tempered. The dross is gone. He's not worthy of you . . . who is?"

Suddenly Judith's tongue was loosed. "You don't understand," she cried, with an earnestness of which there could be no question. "There is no other man. I care for you . . . very much. Oh, I do — I do . . ."

"Then . . . would you marry me — *will* you?" There was a subtle note of irony in his voice which was not lost upon her. But she did not reply and he too was silent for a moment. When he spoke again the irony was less subtle.

"You care enough to marry me if — if . . . things were different?"

"I don't understand." Her voice sounded very far away, as if it did not belong to her at all.

"Oh, yes, you do, Judith Wynrod," he said harshly, like a magistrate passing sentence. She thought she had never heard a voice so cold and terrible, so cruelly impersonal. But, without warning, it changed, and she knew that she had never heard such infinite tenderness.

"Oh, yes, you do . . ." It seemed to come from a great distance, like the soughing of the wind in

the trees, sad, mysterious, supernatural. It was not Good's voice, but something vast, inchoate, nameless. She shivered and drew her coat more closely about her.

"But you're human," the voice went on. "You have more angel in you than most — but you're not an angel. You're wise — very wise, Judith Wynrod — too wise to be an angel. Heaven is for the fools. The wise have the earth. It's the little things — like table manners and polished shoes — that keep us out of heaven. I'm fool enough to brave these little things. But you're wise. You know that they would increase and multiply and crush us both, because they are stronger than we. If we were souls — merely souls — it would be different. But I'm a man. You're human, too. If we were souls alone — less human — less wise — the little things — would not matter. But we aren't just souls. No, we are not — we are not . . ."

The tender, wistful voice died away. The world seemed very distant to Judith for a moment, and only this man, who talked like a god — or an idiot — mattered. There was a tense, fleeting moment, when, had Good known it, the course of both their lives might have been changed. But he did not know it. The moment passed. The wind sighed in the trees again. The myriad noises of the night were loosed. A locomotive whistled dismally. A

thousand tentacles seemed to come down on Judith and overwhelm her and bind her fast; and with the sound of the whistle she knew that the world was with her once more. She had been an angel for a moment. She was one no longer. The tears fell unchecked.

"It's funny, isn't it," Good was saying in a matter-of-fact tone, "that the trifles — things we really don't value at all — should keep people from the one thing that counts. Queer world, this. But it's one of the rules of the game. It's silly to complain. As well mock the stars." His voice broke miserably and he covered his face with his hands. As she stared miserably at the stooped, shabby figure of the truest friend she had ever known, she felt very small and mean and ineffective, wishing that she might say something which would comfort him, knowing that anything she could say would hurt him more than silence. She was shamed by her impotency. But when she thought of the bright camaraderie which had been between them, and would be no more, she was angry. Why had he spoiled it all? Why had he not let things be? She was aroused from her reverie by the sound of his desolate voice.

"Truly, it is the last day. Tears . . . and then ice." He paused. "It will rain presently, I think — with snow," he added quite calmly.

Almost as he spoke the rain began. They parted hurriedly. There was a quick hand-shake, a murmured word, and she was fleeing from him with the print of his lips still hot on her fingers.

It was an utterly wretched woman who sat staring for hours afterward at the blank wall before her. And it was a hopeless, beaten man who trudged through the dripping trees toward the station. Fate had had its pleasure with both. Tired of the sport, it had crushed them like eggshells.

CHAPTER XII

ONLY A WOMAN

THE next day Judith returned to the city. Winter had arrived in earnest and there were other reasons why Braeburn had become impossible. She drove to the station in a storm of blinding sleet, while the wind, howling through trees suddenly become gaunt, seemed to shriek and gibber with derision at her going.

But the city house had its memories, too. Recollections clustered everywhere, mocking her. She made up her mind impulsively that she would go to Florida. It was out of season of course, but it would be the more restful for that. She felt very tired. She even consulted time tables.

But one afternoon, when she was in her motor, she saw Imrie. She followed him with her eyes until he disappeared. She had not seen him for months, though she knew in a vague sort of way, what he was doing. He was perfectly justified, of course, in neglecting her. She had surely done nothing to encourage his attentions. In fact she had done not a little to discourage them completely. Nevertheless his indifference piqued her. She de-

cided not to go to Florida,— at least not until January.

The real reason for the postponement, she managed to convince herself, was her talk with Mrs. Dodson.

It occurred at a little dinner party given by Mrs. Weidely, a lady of the most unimpeachable conventionality, who satisfied an unsuspected craving of her nature by gathering about her the most thoroughly unconventional people she could find. Had her husband, now deceased, not been the upright president of a very large bank, and were her house not, in consequence, situated in a location of indisputable respectability, these dynamic assemblies would have been held with the attentive co-operation of the police, a condition with which some of her guests as a matter of fact were not at all unfamiliar.

Mrs. Dodson, who went out very little, was present chiefly because Mrs. Weidely was a friend of long standing, whose almost tearful assurance that her absence would ruin the evening, had been too touching for resistance. Mrs. Dodson was a kind-hearted, if not particularly credulous, woman.

When Judith arrived, having been invited, she suspected, chiefly to give "balance" to the affair, a young man with a narrow, equine face and a great deal of coarse black hair, who she afterwards learned was named Klemm, was standing in front of the

fireplace, his legs wide apart, and talking very rapidly, in a high, thin voice, punctuating his sentences with rapier-like movements of his long, sharp fingers.

He was a poet, whose ready flow of language, with its glowing flights of hyperbole, had once reacted unfavourably upon a too literal-minded policeman, with a consequent very actual fortnight in jail. It had been a distinctly unpleasant experience, but one which he would not have escaped for worlds. Its immediate effect was a volume of lurid verse, which had a very wide sale. And ever afterward he was able to denounce things as they were, with the assurance of one who knew whereof he spoke. He was young in years, but — he had lived — he had suffered. . . .

"Charity — pah!" he declared with finality. "It is futile, childish, debasing — both to them that give and them that receive. It is abomination — the more organised, the worse it becomes. It is like all — reform." The fine scorn with which he spoke would have made the word shrivel up and disappear, had it been a material organism.

"And for reform you would substitute — revolution?" Judith was conscious of Mrs. Dodson's firm, level voice, contrasting rather unexpectedly with the uncertain falsetto of Mr. Klemm.

"Revolution — yes!" The accompanying gesture was splendidly dramatic. "A man's word,"

he added, sternly, but unfortunately in a tone which was somewhat feminine.

"So far as I know," said Mrs. Dodson, quietly, without any dramatic effect, but in a way which carried conviction, "the real progress of the world has been by evolution. Revolution has usually been followed by reaction, the net advantage being no greater than is secured day after day, year after year, by the despised reformers. Most of the revolutionists I know — talk. The world needs — work!"

It was a stinging rebuke. Mr. Klemm, not easily silenced, had no more to say. He seemed relieved when dinner was announced.

Judith, herself, felt vaguely shamed. The past year, begun with such hopes, such fine purpose — what had it all amounted to — but talk? What had she *done?* What was she but Good's cheque-book? What would she do were he removed? What was she — herself — alone —?

She was silent at dinner, dimly conscious that the man beside her was talking very earnestly about a certain philosophy of painting. She knew only that what he said was of no interest to her. Somehow, in her awakening conception of the bigness and yet the simplicity of life, and of the part she wanted to play in it, the æsthetic arts seemed irrelevant. She had always been ignorant of painting and music,

caring for them only as pretty pictures or melodious diversion. Now, she no longer cared even to pretend that she was not indifferent. Hitherto she had lumped such culture with dress and servants and fine houses — only one among the many "little things." Art had been in no way vital to her: she knew no one, not even the "collectors," to whom it was. Art, to them, as well as to her, was merely one, and a comparatively unimportant one, of the conventions which went to make up the life of the "upper classes." Though she herself owned some of the finest paintings in America, she frankly admitted that they really meant no more to her than the silver plate from which she dined. She smiled as portions of the argot the painter beside her was using, filtered into her consciousness. The poor creature doubtless thought he was flattering her. She wanted to tell him candidly how little his silly chatter interested her. Why did he not tell her something of real value, something which would help her find herself, something which would make her matter in the real world of real things, so that when she was gone there would be a vacancy to fill? Art! She turned away in disgust she could not conceal.

Mrs. Weidely's was a large house, with countless little nooks and crannies where one desirous of solitude might steal away and find it. Mrs. Dodson, Judith suspected, was as bored as she. It was a

simple matter to suggest an escape with her into one of these refuges. The older woman was frankly grateful for the idea. When they were seated, with the chatter of the company drifting faintly to them like the far-off rattle of musketry, Judith voiced her problem. Mrs. Dodson heard her to the end in silence, with a faint suggestion of a smile on her finely-cut lips.

"You are just where I was," she said when Judith had finished the recital, "many years ago. Only I was not so conscious of things as you are — and I had not done what you have done."

"You mean — *The Dispatch?*"

"Yes. That is doing a splendid work — it is waking people up."

"But I haven't done it. It's no credit to me, really."

"I know. But you made it possible. Perhaps you haven't done as much for it as it has done for you. But in either case, much has been accomplished."

"Oh, Mrs. Dodson — if I could only do what you have done — be what you are. . . ." There was no pretence in Judith's admiration as she looked up into the quiet, kindly face of one of the most misunderstood women of her community. It was not a beautiful face. Nature had not been kind to it. But it was a face which, once looked upon, could

never afterward be forgotten. It had the beauty which comes of strength and courage and travail, the beauty with which one is never born, but which must be made. It was the face of one who has grasped life firmly with both hands, and through pain and discouragement, has hewn something which must endure always.

Mrs. Dodson was silent at Judith's honest, if girlish, outburst. She smiled sadly, and her eyes clouded.

"I have done little," she said softly. "And I am — little. I saw my road, long ago. I see it more clearly every day. But I'm not big enough to follow it — very far. I'm too timid. To go on that road, where I know I should go — where I know better and better as the years come — I should have had to leave everything behind. I wasn't equal to that. Those little things — they didn't mean much — they don't now . . . but I can't shake them off — quite. I can't follow the road and take them too. And I can't rest with them and forget the road. So I've — tried to do both. I can't, of course — but I try. I try very hard. It makes me enemies. It makes me unhappy. Even my children — I've stayed partly for them — the road led to such a wild and desolate country — even they don't understand. Perhaps that's why I was so cruel to that young man

to-night. He said things that I wanted to say — and couldn't."

Mrs. Dodson, suddenly looking very old and tired and weak, faded away, and in her place Judith saw Good. "If we were angels," he was saying. "If . . . but we're not. We're only humans. . . ."

Then Good vanished, and Mrs. Dodson, again her quiet, efficient self, reappeared. Her voice had changed, too. It was the calm, business-like tone which the world knew.

"You have wealth, my dear. The pleasures of society no longer appeal. You have made a start. I see no reason for discouragement."

"But I want to *start,*" cried Judith. "I want to feel my hands on something."

"There are a number of committees and boards on which you might serve —"

"Oh, but that's the ordinary thing. I've done *that.*"

"Not exactly." Mrs. Dodson's voice was a trifle grim. "You were a sociological dilettante. You were an amateur, so to speak."

"But it's so cut-and-dried."

"You must first learn the ropes. You have to know your tools before you can use them. It will be dry and tedious, of course, and there will be no sense of accomplishment. It will be educational.

The accomplishment — such as it is — will come later."

"And then — when it comes — it will be reform?" She wondered why the implication was so distasteful.

"Yes, my dear. You have too much to be a revolutionary. You remember the story of the Rich Young Man. It was always so. He was asked to give up *everything.* He could not. I could not. You cannot. You may give more than I — in some ways you already have. But you will not give *all.* You will always be a —"

"— reformer," interrupted Judith bitterly.

"Yes," continued Mrs. Dodson, gently, "only a reformer. Your influence will die with you. You will pass very little on. The radicals will hate and ridicule you. Even those you help will distrust you. And what is worse — you will some day come to distrust them."

"Then why go forward?" cried Judith. "Why not stay where I am and be comfortable?"

Mrs. Dodson smiled wisely. "Because you can't. I remember hearing a gushing young thing ask a great novelist if he didn't just love to write. His reply was, 'I loathe it.' When she looked her amazement — as we all did — he added, 'I'm miserable when I write, but I'm more miserable when I don't.' We thought he was just posing, but I know now what

he meant. I understand perfectly. I loathe the wretched futility of the work I do, with its everlasting cowardice and compromise. I wish I could go back to the life for which I was born and bred, which even those dearest to me, lead now. But I can't do that. Life as it is, is unsatisfying. But any other would be worse."

"Why, I always thought you so happy — one of the happiest women I knew," cried Judith in amazement.

"Oh, well —" Mrs. Dodson's sigh defied analysis. "Such things are relative." She was silent for a moment. Then her voice reverted to its tone of business. "But come — that's enough philosophy. If you talk too much it interferes with doing. Now, if you care to come, I'll have you to lunch with me to-morrow. I'll have some work waiting for you. And when that is finished, there will be more to follow. Will you come?"

Judith looked into the kindly grey eyes, so plainly studying her, and was ashamed of the reluctance and disappointment she felt. She nodded her head affirmatively. Was life always a compromise like this? Must noble aspirations forever fade away in the cold light of fact? The older woman seemed to sense her thought, for she smiled and patted her shoulder gently.

"My dear little girl — I understand. And so

will you — when you find yourself. The world's made up of doers and dreamers. The doers dream a little and the dreamers do a little — it is not given to many to be both. Dream a little, always, my dear, for the good of your soul. And listen always to the dreamers, even when their dreams seem nonsense. But you mustn't be sad because you are only an agent. We are not less human because we are not gods. We have our place in the scheme of things: we must fill it — awkwardly, incompletely, stupidly — still, as best we may."

They parted then, and as soon as she decently could, Judith assured Mrs. Weidely of the "perfectly delightful" evening she had had, and went home. It was a long time before she could sleep.

She spent the morning wandering restlessly through the house. Was she always, she asked herself again and again, to be subject to the influence of others? Was she never to act for herself? Of the influence of Good upon her, she was quite conscious. But that, she sensed, could never be again as it was before that afternoon at Braeburn. When the snow began to fall, it had ended his call, the call of the dreamer. He had given her all he had. It was not enough. Now came the call of the doer. Would that end in time, as the other had ended, and would she then go ahead for herself, not the puppet of Brent Good nor the aid of Mrs. Dodson, but

Judith Wynrod, free agent? She wondered, and wondered. There was no answer.

At length, when she could endure the house no longer, she went out for a walk in the frosty air. She had an hour or two before going to Mrs. Dodson's.

The sun was shining brightly, but it was cold, and she had to walk rapidly. Before she knew it, she was well into the Park, and a little tired. A bench, in the sun and sheltered from the wind, attracted her, and still in a reverie, she sat down.

Presently she became conscious that she was being addressed. A young man had seated himself beside her.

"Arnold," she cried. "Why — I'd never know you. . . ."

"Yes," he said placidly. "I have changed, haven't I?"

As he spoke she realised that he no longer wore the clerical collar, and that he was garbed in a grey suit of distinctly fashionable cut and colour, instead of the sombre black she had always seen him in before. Also, to her amazement, she noted that he wore a red tie. Perhaps it was merely the change of costume, but he seemed years younger than he had ever seemed before. His face was ruddier, his eyes had more sparkle, his smile was easier.

"But why — what is the cause — what's hap-

pened — what's the meaning of all this?" she stammered.

"I've moved fast since we last met. As a matter of fact, Judith, you're looking on a perfect stranger!"

"That's obvious — but why — what — I don't understand."

"In the first place I'm not a clergyman any more — for which there is no rejoicing: but in the second, I'm not a prig any more — for which there is . . ."

"Arnold — you've really left the Church?"

"Or it's left me — the result's the same," he said quite cheerfully.

"But what caused it? I heard you had resigned — everybody talked about it — but why?"

"I don't suppose you ever saw a 'slide' at Panama?"

She shook her head, wondering.

"Well, first a piece of rock, perhaps no bigger than your fist, slips out of place. That moves another and another and another, until before you can whistle twice, a pile of earth that has seemed as fixed as time is as flat as the back of your hand.

"That's the way it was with me. A few months ago I thought my convictions were as fixed as the everlasting hills. I looked solid — but I wasn't. Really, I was made up of very small pieces. Then, when you poked fun at me, you jarred one of those

pieces out of place. That moved another — and another — and another . . . until with a rush, the whole thing came tumbling about my ears. When the noise was over and the dust settled, it was up to me to set about putting the pieces together again as best I could. I don't know what kind of a mess I'd have made of it if I hadn't had the luck to fall in with Dr. Weis — perhaps you've heard of him?"

"Only vaguely," admitted Judith.

"Well, he's a Jew and a free thinker and an anarchist and a human fire-brand — and the most all around fine character I've ever known! Anyway, he took an interest in me as I floundered about — he seems to think he can make something out of me." His mingled pride and humility was indescribably boyish and lovable to Judith. He sounded a new note, quite free from the cant with which, in her mind, he had never been quite disassociated.

"And are you happier now?" she asked when he paused.

"Much," he said thoughtfully. "I was successful at St. Viateur's and I was popular, and I thought I was doing good work. But I'm happier now — really I am — consciously happy, I mean. In a way I'm a failure, of course, and I've lost most of my old friends, but the newer ones seem truer — and what I've lost in the respect of others, I've gained in the respect of myself. Yes, I'm happier now."

"But what are you doing?"

"Well, we've established a sort of peoples' church, with meetings in one of the downtown theatres. It's for those who haven't any creed, or even much faith. We seem to have some kind of a hold. There's rarely an empty seat."

"Do you preach?"

"Once in a while. But I wouldn't call it preaching. I've come to dislike that word. This is something different. You can't *preach,* you know, to our kind of people. That's what made lots of them leave their churches. Jesus never preached. But oh, Judith —" His eyes flashed and she thought his enthusiasm in keeping with his red tie. He had always been so reserved, hitherto. "I've never experienced anything like talking to those people. When I was in the pulpit at St. Viateur's, with all you comfortable, smug, well-fed, contented people before me, talking to you seemed only a form, and what I said, merely a formula. You didn't care *what* I said, and I didn't — it was *how* I said it. But now — I tell you there's an intoxication in talking to people who've come because they get something, not because they ought to, or because it's the thing. It's no wonder that the biggest men in the land are glad to appear on our stage."

"Do you do any welfare work?" Judith found his enthusiasm infectious.

"In a way — mostly getting people jobs and things like that. We're not very well organised yet, but we're working all the time."

"I suppose — you lack money?"

"Of course. That handicaps us tremendously. But . . ."

"Would a cheque — be of use?"

He looked at her thoughtfully for a moment, as if not quite sure of her meaning. Then he smiled and shook his head.

"You don't understand. One of the principles of our plan is to be beholden to no one. We can't accept gifts. You see — we want no vestries." There was a note of bitterness in his voice.

"But I — surely —" He sensed that she was a little hurt.

"We take up a collection. You might drop in some night, and then — if you cared to . . ."

"Yes," she said thoughtfully, "I'll come."

They were silent for a little while, but it was a silence in which there was no consciousness of the flight of time.

"Who are your speakers?" asked Judith finally, already feeling that she had a personal share in the enterprise. "Clergymen?"

"Sometimes. But that's not essential. It's the man we seek — not the creed. We want anyone with a message. We've had all kinds. You see,

we're not engaged in propaganda — rather we're spreading the truth — as all kinds of men see it. We're committed to nothing. It's a good deal like *The Dispatch* — no policy but the truth. By the way, how's that going?"

"As well as could be expected, I suppose," said Judith with an apathy which did not escape him. "I really have very little to do with it."

"That's natural."

"I suppose so. Anyway, Mr. Good and Roger need no assistance from me."

"Is Roger really active?"

"Indeed he is. He used to be rather submissive to me, but now he acts as if I really knew very little about it. I'm glad he does, too. It shows he's grown up. The best thing about *The Dispatch* is what it's done for Roger."

"No, it isn't," said Imrie soberly. "That's a good thing, of course. I'm delighted. But it's not the best thing — not by a long way. Frankly I was sceptical about *The Dispatch* at first. I thought your friend Good was just a crank. But the paper's gone ahead so splendidly. It's done such a really wonderful work — and then, you see, when I waked up, I saw things differently. The people I've been in contact with lately have made me understand Good. I used rather to dislike him. I honestly admire him now."

"Yes," said Judith quietly, "he is rather admirable." Something in her voice made Imrie study her narrowly. A wistful look crept into his eyes, and he was silent. Judith, subconsciously, realised the change in him and she hastened to shift the topic.

"But this work doesn't take all your time, does it? What else are you doing?" She rather expected a denial, and his reply surprised her.

"No, it doesn't," he said, with something of his former enthusiasm gone. "Or rather I haven't told you all of our work. You see Weis has gone into politics rather more or less in his own city, and we're drifting that way, too. They want me to run for alderman. I live downtown now, you see. It's a bad ward. The decent people have never had a chance in it. Of course it sounds silly — but really — I think seriously of it."

"I don't think it sounds silly at all," she cried. "I think it's splendid. You can count on *The Dispatch.*"

"But *The Dispatch* isn't partisan," he said with a smile. "It never takes sides."

"Well, it will this time," she declared truculently.

He laughed. "You're still a woman, Judith." Then his expression changed, and his voice was tender. "I guess that's all you ever will be — to me."

The wind had shifted, making their refuge no lon-

ger comfortable, and Judith suddenly became conscious of the hour.

"Goodness — I've only ten minutes to get to Mrs. Dodson's. Coming that way?"

He nodded, and fell in beside her. They walked all the way in silence. When they reached the magnificent building in which Mrs. Dodson slept, but which seldom saw her when awake, Judith held out her hand.

"You haven't been near me for ages. Won't you come — occasionally — as you used to?"

"Do you really want me to?" His eyes seemed extraordinarily bright as he put the question.

"Of course."

"Then I will." He kept his gaze on her for a moment. With a wave of his hand he turned sharply on his heel, and was on his way as if time were precious.

Never, she thought, as she went into the house, had Imrie looked quite so handsome, quite so virile. And never, certainly had she extended an invitation to him which was more sincere, nor with the prospect of its acceptance more wholly appealing. Yet she could not rid herself of an inexplicable sadness.

It was some time, as she tried to listen attentively to Mrs. Dodson's level voice, before the picture of a pair of glistening blue eyes and a head of close-

cropped, curly, blonde hair, and ruddy cheeks, and a set of firm white teeth, parted in a smile, half wistful, half enthusiastic, ceased dancing before her.

She was, she concluded, only a woman.

CHAPTER XIII

THE PILOT GOES OVERBOARD

Good and Roger Wynrod sat in the latter's office one afternoon, about a week later, discussing, as was their regular habit, the day's paper. This conference had always been a one-sided one, but of late the balance had shifted. At first Good had done the talking and Roger had listened. Now it was the other way around. That the change was not displeasing to Good was manifest from the faint smile which played around his lips. He smoked his pipe gravely and had very little to say. He acquiesced in everything and made no suggestions.

When matters of a routine nature had been disposed of, Roger leaned back in his chair and lighted a cigarette.

"I had lunch the other day with Dick Menefee, Corey's new advertising manager," he said with a reminiscent chuckle. "He was in my class in college — same society and all that. First thing he asked me was why *The Dispatch* was on their blacklist."

"I suppose you told him?"

"With variations. Also I told him one or two things they probably don't know at Corey's."

"About —?"

"Yes. It interested him because he doesn't cotton to Joe much better than we do."

"What happened?"

"Well, Dick's an independent sort of a chap, with some fancy ideas of his own. He couldn't see why they should pass up a chance to sell goods to our readers just for spite. I tried to explain it to him, but he didn't seem impressed. He said he was going to stir things up."

"Did he?"

Roger smiled. "Rather! I saw him again yesterday. It seems they had a most beautiful row. Dick resigned and Faxon threatened to, and Corey couldn't make up his mind whether he'd fire 'em before they had a chance to resign. Oh, it was a jolly mess . . . but we'll have a contract like the old one in a day or two!"

"Not really?"

"Big as life. Menefee pointed out to them that while they could use their advertising appropriation as a club, it was only a stuffed club. If any paper had sense enough to call the bluff all they could do was to crawl as gracefully as possible. He raked up a lot of old records and showed Corey where he was losing cold dollars by staying out of *The Dis-*

patch. He said he didn't know what the rest of them were but he was a business man, and he didn't give a damn what sort of stuff a paper ran if it sold goods for him. That struck the old man as pretty good sense, and he refused to accept Dick's resignation. Faxon saw which way the wind had shifted and reefed his canvas. Anyway . . . they're coming back."

"The other stores will follow, I suppose."

"They're bound to," cried Roger. "They're bluffed to a standstill, and they know it. With Corey's backing down they've got to follow suit — pride or no pride."

"I suppose you're pretty pleased," said Good with a smile.

"Pleased? Honest, I'm tickled pink! I feel as if I'd been sitting in on a sky-the-limit game boosting the ante with a pair of shoe-strings. I've felt like passing lots of times. Without you at my elbow I guess I'd have done it."

"You think that's — unusual?"

"Maybe not that. But I do feel — well — like a burglar."

"My dear boy," laughed Good, "I'm not much of a business man, but I think a general show-down would reveal a lot of jokers in front of chaps who are playing like royal flushes. A good face with an empty hand wins in other games besides poker.

You can't bank nerve — but you can draw checks on it."

As he finished speaking, a boy entered and handed him a card. He glanced at it, hesitated a moment, scratching his head thoughtfully, and then, with an inscrutable smile, passed it to Roger.

"It's for you, lad."

"But didn't he ask for you?" said Roger surprisedly.

"Yes — but he made a mistake."

"All right — show him in."

A moment later a round little man, with bulging eyes which peered near-sightedly and with a curiously worried expression from beneath a deeply furrowed forehead, seated himself at the desk behind which Roger was seated.

"Mr. Good," he began, "I . . ."

Good, who had withdrawn his chair unobtrusively into a corner, spoke quietly.

"You're addressing Mr. Wynrod. He's the man you want to see."

The little man did not hesitate. "I see. Well, Mr. Wynrod, I am Mr. Burdick — Philemon P. Burdick. Possibly you've heard of me?" He paused, and when there was no response, proceeded, apparently neither surprised nor disappointed. "Evidently you have not. However, that is immaterial — quite immaterial. The purpose of my

call is not to acquaint you with myself, but with my work." He paused again.

"Yes?"

"I have come, sir, to seek your assistance — the assistance of your excellent publication, I should say."

Roger stirred a trifle uneasily, and Mr. Burdick, the worried expression in his eyes deepening, hurried on, as if fearful of interruption.

"First I wish to congratulate you upon *The Dispatch.* It is doing a noble work. The community owes you a debt of gratitude, sir, a very great debt."

"Thank you," murmured the young man at the desk.

"But there is one thing — a little thing, and yet a great thing — which you have left undone. It is my purpose now to ascertain your position in the matter."

"Yes?" Roger looked puzzled.

"If you knew me better you would know that I am very deeply interested in what is rather unfortunately called the single-tax. Now . . ."

Again Roger stirred, but this time Mr. Burdick, his eyes shining with zeal, and little drops of perspiration standing out all over his forehead, appeared not to notice the fact. He continued as if he were conscious of no interruption.

". . . the theory of the single-tax is so absolutely

in accord with common sense that one needs only to become familiar with it to become enthusiastic. All that is necessary to make the single, or land tax, an accomplished fact, and to bring about immediately the complete abolition of poverty, sir, is publicity. But there's the rub —"

He halted a moment to mop his glistening brow. His sincerity was indisputable, but his countenance was so incongruously droll that even Good, sitting quietly in the shadow, and not feeling at all like laughter, found it difficult to repress a smile.

"Yes, sir," continued Mr. Burdick, "there's the rub. We need publicity. But most avenues, I regret to say, are closed to us. Most mediums are afraid of us. They look upon us as dangerous radicals. Of course that's absurd. Look at me — do *I* look like a dangerous radical?"

It would have required a bigot indeed to so characterise the stout little gentleman who looked as if harsh words would bring tears to his eyes. Roger made a sound in his throat which was meant to signify derision at the thought, but which, to Good, sounded suspiciously like an abortive chuckle.

"Yes, it is absurd. But the fact remains. Most newspapers are unwilling to advance the cause. Instead of getting down on their knees to the memory of Henry George, they deride it — yes, sir, they deride it!"

Roger tried to look his horror, and Mr. Burdick went on vigorously.

"I say *most* newspapers. And I say it with a purpose, sir. I don't suppose you can guess what it is?" He smiled archly, and when Roger could not guess, he added, with profound conviction, "*The Dispatch,* thank God, is not like most papers. It is free, daring, original. I ask you, sir, to use it in a cause worthy of all its freedom, its daring, its originality. I ask you — yes, I *command* you — to put its tremendous and growing power behind the greatest movement of the age, that . . ."

"You mean . . ."

"I mean," said Mr. Burdick with solemnity, as if he were conferring an accolade, "I mean that I seek the enlistment of *The Dispatch* under the glowing banner of the single-tax."

He folded his arms and waited for a reply. Roger cast a troubled glance at Good, and turned away helplessly from the blank countenance which met him. It seemed to the tall man, studying his protégé narrowly through half-closed lids, that he was indecisive. But he waited hopefully. He was not certain. Presently Roger bit off the end of a cigar, and chewed it thoughtfully. Then he squared his shoulders and the light of resolution came into his eyes. Good sighed contentedly. He had been mistaken.

"I guess you don't quite understand *The Dispatch,* Mr. Burdick," said Roger quietly, but none the less firmly. "It doesn't take sides."

"But the single-tax . . ."

"It makes no difference what the side is. We're not partisan."

"But, my dear sir," cried Mr. Burdick, a quite unsuspected temper manifesting itself. "It's not a political party. It's not a religion. It's not — dogmatic in any sense. It's just — an *idea.* You seem to favour advanced ideas. You give space . . . why, you had two columns about a socialist meeting that was raided by the police!"

"I know," said Roger gently. "But — that was news."

The subtle distinctions implied in that sentence appeared to halt the little man for a moment. But he was not long daunted.

"Well," he cried triumphantly, "wasn't the abolition of slavery *news?* Wouldn't the abolition of poverty be *news?* My dear young man —" His tone became unmistakably patronising. "It would be the most tremendous piece of news you could possibly print. Everything else would pale into insignificance beside it. Why . . ."

"Mr. Burdick," Roger's voice was a trifle cold. The intimation of patronage had annoyed him. "Personally I might have all kinds of sympathy with

the idea you represent. But that has nothing to do with it. We're running a *news*paper — nothing else. We print news — not opinions. The distinction must be clear to you, I'm sure." His momentary irritation had vanished, and he finished with a friendly smile.

But Mr. Burdick's wrath was not to be thus easily assuaged.

"Then you decline to take any interest in our cause?" he demanded belligerently, his sudden truculence contrasting very curiously with his peaceful face. As a matter of fact, no one could be more keenly conscious of his inadequate appearance than he was himself. More than once he had stood before his mirror and cursed the image which blinked timidly back at him. A man of less will would have yielded and become resignedly subject to the body which Nature had imposed upon him. But Mr. Burdick was a man of rare spirit.

"You don't believe in it, do you?" he continued, in a voice which had become shrill. "You're opposed to it?"

"On the contrary —"

"Then why . . ." Obviously Mr. Burdick was exasperated.

"My dear Mr. Burdick," said Roger patiently, "I've already told you. Your cause is a good one — sure. But so's the Y. M. C. A. So are foreign

missions. So's the Republican Party — now and then. But causes aren't news. You talk about the abolition of slavery. Sure — that was news . . . *after* the abolition. Go ahead and abolish poverty — I don't care how little — and we'll give you the run of the paper. But you've got to *break out.* You've got to make news. If you can't make it by abolishing poverty, hire a hall and get pinched . . . we'll give you two columns too."

"If you are endeavouring to be flippant . . ." began Mr. Burdick, rising, and drawing himself up to his full height — which was not very impressive, as none knew better than himself.

"No," said Roger very earnestly. "I'm not. I never was more serious in my life. Only you won't understand. People with axes to grind never do. They always get sore when we won't help the job. You see . . ."

"I shall wish you a very good afternoon," said Mr. Burdick stiffly.

Roger shrugged his shoulders. "As you please. I hope the wish comes true."

The little man ignored the persiflage. He clapped his hat down on his head savagely, and beat what was intended for a very dignified retreat, but which, for reasons over which the poor man had no control, fell short of the intention in several essential particulars.

"And say," called Roger, as his visitor reached the doorway, "don't get sore. Drop in occasionally and have a chat."

The slamming door was the only response. Roger laughed and turned to Good who had sat like a graven image all through the interview.

"Well — how did it go?"

For reply Good rose and stretched himself and yawned prodigiously — all of which procedure was an elaborate simulation of emotions which he did not in the least feel. He then walked over to the desk and carefully emptied his pipe. And finally, with sustained deliberateness, he held out his great hand.

"Put it there, my boy," he said gravely. But Roger had hardly complied, eyeing him curiously the while, when Good's hand dropped and he walked to the window. It was several minutes before he turned and met the younger man's gaze with his own.

"I guess I can go now," he said in a voice which seemed at once triumphant and inexpressibly sad.

"I don't understand . . ."

"You've learned all I have to teach you, lad." Good's deep voice was low, but it reverberated sonorously in the little room. "You're on the bridge now. You're in deep water. You can drop the pilot."

"What the dickens are you driving at, anyway?"

"I'm quitting, Roger." The words were said almost in a whisper, and the deep-set, wistful eyes gleamed very tenderly. "My work's done. It's up to you now."

"You don't mean . . . you're not leaving the paper? Why, that's nonsense! It can't be. What's upset you, anyhow? Oh, come, this won't do, you know. I won't have it. I simply won't. Why, good Lord, man — I'd be lost!"

"No." Good shook his head and his voice vibrated as if he found it difficult to hold it in check. "You're free now. This talk proved it. You don't need me any longer. I've done my work. It's time to wander."

"But w-w-*why?*" stammered Roger. "Can't you give any reason? What's the trouble at the bottom of it? You haven't had a fuss with sis, have you? Surely you're not doing this just because I'm more on my feet than I was? I'm far from not needing you, God knows. Aren't there other reasons?"

"Yes," said Good dully, "there are other reasons."

"Well, good Lord," cried Roger in exasperation mingled with alarm. "Won't you tell them?"

"No," said Good shortly, "I won't." Then, abruptly, he held out his hand. "Good-bye, lad. Here's luck." His voice broke, and he turned.

Before Roger could get around the desk to him, the door had closed and he was gone.

The young man stood with his jaw hanging. He was utterly nonplussed. Good had gone out of his life as suddenly, as unreasonably, as amazingly as he had come into it. He racked his brains futilely for an explanation. Had he been a trifle younger it is probable that he would have wept.

It was the end of the day, and darkness had fallen. But even if it had been the first hour of the morning he would have gone home at once. The office had become unendurable.

He found Judith having tea with Imrie. Though of a thoroughly objective nature, not given to unnecessary straying into imaginative by-paths, particularly those with unpleasant endings, Roger was far from insensible to the grim irony of the situation. He almost laughed as he told his news.

Judith received the tidings more calmly than he had anticipated. Indeed, he could not recall, subsequently, that she said anything at all. It is possible, however, that she said more than he heard. The fact was that rather more instinctively than consciously, he watched, most closely, the effect of the intelligence upon Imrie.

But whatever Imrie's emotions, he concealed them well. He said very little, managing to express his surprise and regret with an apparently quite genuine

sincerity. In a few moments he recalled a forgotten engagement, and left. It was not lost upon Roger that his tea was untasted . . .

Judith, however, recalled him to less recondite speculation.

"It's absurd, of course," she said in a voice which struck him as very strange and mechanical. "He can't leave us like this. It's too ridiculous." For a moment he thought her feeling was one of resentment. "Where can I reach him?" she asked abruptly. He concluded that it was something quite different.

"God knows," he said. "But don't worry. It's just a tantrum. He'll be back."

"Did you ever know him to have a tantrum?" demanded Judith, almost fiercely. Roger was startled. He had never seen his sister look or act just like that before. He tried, unsucessfully, to guess what it all signified.

"Call up the office and see if you can get his address," she ordered. Obediently he went to the telephone. When he returned, she was pacing slowly to and fro before the fireplace. Her mouth was curiously set, with what sentiments he could not tell, and her eye-brows were drawn together in two deep incisions. At her unspoken question he shook his head.

"But I must find him — I simply must, you

know," she cried petulantly, like a child. He could only shrug his shoulders.

"It's so utterly silly," she murmured.

Suddenly she ceased pacing the floor, to stand staring, glassy-eyed, at him . . . and then, like a pricked balloon, she collapsed inertly on the lounge, her face buried in her arms. Her heaving back and the sound from the cushions, needed no explanation.

Roger stole softly from the room. He wondered, uncomfortably, as he went upstairs, if he would ever understand women. Being about to marry one, it struck him that some sort of understanding was rather important.

CHAPTER XIV

A SECRET REVEALED

I

BUT more pressing matters drove the curious problem presented by his sister and Good temporarily out of Roger's mind. He was dining with Molly Wolcott that evening, and, as he dressed, his thoughts, quite properly, centred exclusively in her.

It was she herself, however, who recalled the distressing situation.

"How's Mr. Good?" she asked. Somewhat to his surprise her father echoed the question, with what seemed like more than a mere polite interest.

Briefly he told the simple facts as they had occurred, refraining from any attempt at explanation.

"But didn't he give any reason?" asked Mollie incredulously, when he had finished.

"Not a one."

"Did he say there was a reason?" Roger thought it a little odd that the Judge should manifest such concern for a person with whom he could have had only the slightest acquaintance.

"Yes," he admitted, "he did."

"But he wouldn't give it?"

"No. And he skipped so fast I didn't have time to press him much."

"Have you any hypothesis?" The Judge fingered his watch chain nervously. It occurred to Roger that he was making an effort to seem only mildly interested.

"Well . . . yes, I have." Roger hesitated for a moment. The theory he had formulated was not one which he cared to present. It would be scornfully rejected, he felt, before he had an opportunity to elaborate it. And, as a matter of fact, he was forced to admit, it was not a very explanatory theory at best. It needed explanation in itself.

"Go on," said Molly. She had noted his pause and was the more expectant in consequence.

"Well . . . it's a funny thing — but this business has been in the air. I've noticed a different spirit around the office for a couple of weeks. You know Good was the idol of the boys on the staff. They were a little suspicious of him at first, I guess. He was too good to be true. Bassett has hinted as much. But that wore off. He proved he was no fake. They came to trust him absolutely. Then, all of a sudden, the whole thing seemed to change. I've noticed lots of queer little things lately. The boys have been pretty cool toward him. I've taxed several of them with it, but I couldn't get anything out of them. He's lost his hold on them. There

isn't any doubt of that. He isn't the leader any more. He's done something — I don't know what — but it must have made the boys pretty sore. Anyway, they seem to have sent him to Coventry for it. I guess the poor chap got so discouraged he just had to quit. That's the way I figure it out."

"Isn't that a shame," cried Molly. "Do you think he's to blame — has he really done something awful?"

"Blessed if I know." Roger shook his head helplessly. "Knowing the man as I've known him, I can't believe it. But Bassett's one of the coldest of them all — and I'd trust Bassett to the limit. It certainly is a puzzle." He was silent for a moment. Then he added slowly, as if he were reluctant to put his thought into speech: "Of course Good's led a pretty hard life, you know. Maybe some of it came back on him — maybe he had a relapse. Liquor had him once. Maybe . . ."

"Has Judith any explanation?" asked the Judge suddenly.

"None that I know of."

"Was she — surprised?"

"Honestly, Judge, I don't know," said Roger candidly. "She acted mighty queer. First she seemed surprised, and then she didn't. For a minute I kind of thought she was — well — sore. But . . ." A picture flashed across his memory of Ju-

dith on the lounge, with the sobs shaking her shoulders. ". . . I guess it was disappointment. She thought the world of Good, you know."

"Indeed, yes!" cried Molly. "I've often thought . . ." But she never finished saying what it was she thought. Her father rose abruptly.

"I think if you young people will — er — excuse me . . ." His voice was strangely tremulous. "I'm a trifle tired."

"Your father looks kind of knocked up over something," said Roger when the old man had left them. "Anything wrong?"

Her face clouded. "I — don't know. He's been awfully busy. He's not very well. That attack last winter — he's never shaken it off, quite. Sometimes — I'm afraid! Oh, Roger — if anything should happen . . ." Suddenly she burst into wholly unexpected tears.

Roger, comforting her, experienced a vague satisfaction, for which he knew he should be ashamed — but was not. Molly was such a sturdy soul, so self-sufficient and self-contained, it delighted him to know that she could cry . . . just like any ordinary protectible woman.

Upstairs, in his study, the Judge had seated himself before his desk, the tips of his long white fingers clasped together. For a long time he remained immobile, staring blankly at the wall before

him. The single green-shaded lamp at his elbow cast grotesque shadows at his infrequent movements. Finally he sighed, as if he were very tired, and put out the light.

II

When the maid went up with the Judge's coffee next morning, she found him already fully dressed.

"Tell O'Neil I'll have the car at once," he said quietly.

"But Miss Wolcott, sir, she's . . ."

"At once, please."

In relaying the order to the chauffeur the maid volunteered the interesting information that she had left the Judge swallowing his breakfast with unprecedented haste, and that the newspaper had not been unfolded. The chauffeur, having designs of a serious nature upon her, was obliged to conceal his natural repugnance to haste, disassociated from a motor: but he consoled himself with the other part of her message. It was not unpleasant to discover in the lady of one's choice such evidence of keen perception He went to his task whistling.

III

As Roger came down to breakfast he fancied he heard the front door slam. Judith was just leaving the library.

"Having callers?" he asked cheerfully.

"No," she said shortly. He noticed suddenly that her face seemed bloodless. Fired with a vague suspicion that matters were not as they should be, he strolled over to the window.

"Whose car is that outside? Say — that looks for all the world like the Judge. What's he doing out at this hour d'ye suppose?"

"I'm sure I can't guess." Judith's voice seemed curiously dry and husky. She was gazing sightlessly straight before her. Roger ached to voice the questions which rose in his mind, but the expression on his sister's face deterred him. He contented himself with studying her narrowly.

It was Judith who broke the silence first.

"Roger," she said suddenly, "I want you to arrange at once with a detective agency to find Mr. Good."

"Oh, see here, sis," he protested. "That's foolish, you know. He'll come back — give him time."

"I can wait no longer," said Judith coldly. "Please do as I ask — this morning."

"That was the Judge who was here. He told you something?" demanded Roger accusingly. There was no reply. He finished his meal before questioning her again. There was still no reply. Then he shrugged his shoulders and left her. When his sister's lips formed a line like the cut of a razor,

Roger knew the futility of interrogation or argument.

Within an hour the machinery of one of the greatest systems of espionage in the world was set in motion for the trifling purpose of locating the present whereabouts of one Brent Good, described as well over six feet tall, with hazel eyes, thin hair, a large mouth and nose, heavy eyebrows, a deep and not unmusical voice, a marked stoop to the shoulders, and wearing a suit, as Roger expressed it, "rather brown."

CHAPTER XV

"THIRTY"— AND ANOTHER STORY

BUT the weeks rolled away, and although the reports from the detective agency were frequent and voluminous — as were the bills — Good remained as elusive as ever. Even Roger, with his dogged insistence that "he'd come back all right," grew perceptibly less and less optimistic. Yet through it all Judith came and went with her head high, and a smile always ready. Since that mysterious morning she seemed to have undergone a subtle change. Certainly there was no further evidence of the sullen resentment which Roger had thought he had detected at first. But there remained an abstractedness about her which was hard to fathom. When he thought her listening, she seemed always to be waiting for something. Indeed, he grew quite worried about her, and would, in all probability have aroused her violent wrath by consulting a physician, had not the fact of his approaching wedding driven all such comparatively unimportant matters out of his head.

Imrie came increasingly to see her, and although he never said anything about it, it was perfectly clear

that Judith's detachment had not escaped him. Only once did he go so far as to voice his thoughts.

"What the dickens is Judith waiting for, Roger?" he demanded one evening, after a particularly unsatisfactory dinner, at which she had made no effort even to appear attentive. But Roger could only shake his head and wonder too . . . and in two minutes forget everything in the world save Molly Wolcott.

The end came one morning, when he and Judith were at breakfast. He was aroused from his newspaper by a whispered "at last" from his sister. Her colour was strangely high, and her eyes sparkled. She was opening a letter. He watched her closely, wondering what had happened.

Suddenly her face blanched, and her hand went to her throat in a gesture which recalled to him the day he had apprised her of Good's resignation. A faint little cry escaped her lips. For a moment she laid down the letter and closed her eyes. Then she picked it up again, and read it, apparently, to the end.

"What's the news?" he asked, willing no longer to let her inexplicable demeanour go unprobed.

"It's a letter from Good," she said mechanically.

"What's he say?"

"He says he's been ill. That's why he hasn't been to see us. He'll come as soon as he's about."

"I see." Roger's tone was lofty. His disgust was profound if unspoken. He was offended by her manifest reluctance to confide in him, and he did not scruple to show the fact. Although consumed with curiosity to know what Good actually had written — and, indeed, *why* he had written at all — he was too proud to question her. With a muttered grunt, expressive of anything which one might choose to read into it, he buried himself anew in his paper, and presently, without again referring to the subject, left the table. His manner, meant to show a consciousness of injury, and at the same time, readiness for conciliation, produced no apparent effect. It is doubtful if Judith was aware of his departure. He left, therefore, with his chagrin redoubled, full of suspicion, and utterly bewildered at the tortuous mental processes of all women, and his sister in particular.

Judith was still immersed in the letter. Its bold, uneven scrawl was familiar, but with an indefinable touch of weakness, never before apparent. The paper was of the cheapest, a trifle soiled, and torn in several places. It had been written with a soft pencil, it began, characteristically, without salutation.

"Some time in the pleistocene age, journalists formed the habit of ending their news despatches

with the mystic symbol, 30. It signifies — the end.

"I write to tell you that it looks as if it was time to write 30 to the tedious narrative of yours truly. In a word — I'm not the man I was. Which is a cryptic way of saying that I'm more ghost than flesh now, and shifting rapidly. The medico, who is a poor liar, also has a loud voice and doesn't know how thin boarding-house walls are. I heard him tell the landlady that money for medicine was a case of economic folly. I was a gone goose — or words to that effect.

"It's been a long road and mostly a hard one. I'm not sorry to reach the end. You see, I never really learned how to walk. Now and then I thought I had. But the thought was always followed by a tumble. The last was the hardest. I don't want to try any more. And when a man gets too tired to *try* — well, there's nothing left but crêpe, is there?

"Really, the doctor's information is quite the cheerfullest thing I could hear. All I ask is that they ring down the curtain on the delectable comedy of 'Brent Good, Misfit,' as expeditiously as possible. From what he said, I judge they will.

"I've tried more things in my allotted span than ten men ordinarily try. And I've failed, with perfect uniformity, in every one. I counted much on

The Dispatch. I stubbed my spiritual toe there, too. . . ."

At that point Judith had to pause, because a mist formed over her eyes and would not let her see. And the next words brought a lump into her throat, which choked and hurt.

". . . I hoped much — no, *hope* is hardly the word for what I wanted — from you. And of course — as I never for an instant doubted I would — I failed there. Now there's nothing left. I wonder what the next instalment of the yarn will bring. Do the gods, think you, punish failure as men do?

"But I wander. (My speculations to the landlady regarding reincarnation have resulted in her frantic appeal to the doctor, with a bottle of something, in consequence, by my side. That's the scientific way of solving the problem of immortality.) However, I'm not writing you now to oblige you to join with me in conjecturing as to what lies in the Other Room. It's this one, and your place in it that troubles me now.

"I just want to express a sixty-first second sort of a hope that you won't lose interest in *The Dispatch.* But even as I write, I know that you, being quite human, in all probability will. Strangely enough I

have a feeling that Roger will be more likely to carry it through than you will. Men can play baseball all their lives, when six weeks of crusading is more than plenty. He'll go through with it because it's a sporting proposition.

"But you — well, I guess one has to starve before he becomes a real revolutionary. You'll have to pay the price the gods demand for a full stomach, by being a trimmer all your days. That doesn't mean you won't do big things. You will, and *The Dispatch* will be only one of them. But you won't do them quite as I — being more or less insane — would have you do them. Still, if you were poor, and therefore understood life as I understand it, you couldn't do anything at all. So I'm satisfied.

"This is all queer stuff and hard to understand. But remember, to the natural eccentricities of my nature are added the hallucinations of approaching dissolution.

"Keep on with the paper as long as you can, and as bravely as you can. Don't yield to the discouragement which will always be just over your shoulder, because it accomplishes little. Never forget that you're only a link in a chain. If you keep your link sound you've done about all you can do. To you life is long, and the world putty in your hands. But after all, you're only an atom on the everlasting shore.

"*The Dispatch* is the paper of Truth. All reformers — most hypocrites — sing the same song. It seems the easiest thing in the world to tell the truth. But I know there is nothing harder. And it's not because truth frequently clashes with the human side of our lives — though God knows that is hard enough — but because no one knows what truth is.

"It's a struggle worthy of fine souls to *tell* the truth. But it's a far greater struggle to know what the truth is.

"It is that struggle, being the only precious thing I have, that I bequeath to you.

"There is nothing more to say, I guess, save to wish you well. You will doubtless marry the dominie. I used to hate him, very largely for that fact. But now, as I lie here, on a cool, high mountain, far from the blinding heat of passion (that's a good line, don't you think?) things look differently. When he stood between you and me, he cast a monstrous shadow. Now I see him for what he is. He's just a fellow-traveller on the road I have tried to walk — on your side of it. May God give you both all that I would have him give me.

"As my final request (this has been full of 'final requests,' hasn't it!) I ask that you forget me as promptly and as thoroughly as you can. My rôle

in your life has been played. Let me get off the stage now, and stay off for keeps.

"Forget me — the Fool. Remember, please, only the things I groped for — the Angel. Good-bye."

For a long time Judith sat staring stonily at the irregular black lines, wandering stormily, like the life of their author, over the tattered paper. She fingered the envelope listlessly. It bore no address.

When the maid came to remove the breakfast things, she was dumfounded to discover her mistress with her head in her hands, but quite silent. Frightened, she withdrew quickly, to convey the strange intelligence below stairs.

Upon her return, in obedience to the disgusted promptings of the cook, who thought she was foolish ever to have left so interesting a scene, she found Judith just rising from the table, very pale, but otherwise as calm and self-contained as usual.

"I want the car at once," she said, a little huskily. And when the maid hesitated stupidly, she added in a tone which was almost fierce, "At once — do you hear?"

"I've never seen her look like that — never!" declared the maid when she was safe below stairs again.

"There's things the likes o' you can't understand," said the cook darkly.

"What d'ye mean?" cried the kitchen in chorus.

"I believe I'm able to keep the secrets as are intrusted to me," said the cook very haughtily, and with a finality which encouraged no further interrogation. Safely concealed behind the day-old newspaper — useful shield in time of distress — she concluded that her prestige had been rather strengthened than otherwise by the incident. The chauffeur's eldest boy chuckled furtively, to be sure, but then, he was an impertinent brat, whose opinion was of no consequence whatever.

While the kitchen buzzed with suppressed speculation, Judith was closeted with a placid little man whose business was the disclosure of other peoples' secrets.

"I have a clue, I think," she cried breathlessly.

"Yes?" His tone was quite noncommittal. Years of disillusionment had robbed him of all enthusiasm.

"I have a letter — this . . ." She drew Good's tattered scrawl from her bag. The detective held out his hand — and drew it back empty. It was his business to see things which were not intended for him to see, and her sudden flush was not lost upon him. Nor did the involuntary movement of her hand, with the letter, toward the bag, escape him.

But by not so much as the flutter of an eyelid did his countenance change.

"No address given, I suppose?"

"No."

"May I see . . . the envelope?" He noticed that her blush was more pronounced as she handed it to him. And as he held it up to the light and seemed to be studying it intently, he was really considering the different features of what was, even to him, a distinctly unusual case. Why was this young woman so tremendously desirous of locating an obscure journalist that she employed detectives for the purpose? And why did she colour and hold so tenaciously to a note from him? On the face of it it looked like a typical bit of soiled linen in high place — cases of which sort he was familiar with to the point of ennui. But his professional eminence had not been attained merely through industry: he was possessed of considerably more than a normal share of intuition — and intuition made the natural hypothesis untenable. He shrugged his shoulders. To find Good — as he studied the postmark on the envelope, he dismissed that problem as unworthy of his ability. But to explain why Miss Judith Wynrod wanted to find him — that, he admitted quite frankly to himself, was another matter.

Matters which he did not understand were nevertheless an inevitable part of his daily routine. He

had long since ceased to allow any diversion from the hard business in hand by even the most fascinating of speculation. And obstacles did not halt him long. Like the ant, he never stopped to scale them: he went around. It was very much quicker — and time was of importance.

As if it were of trifling consequence, he handed back the letter from Good. "I'll phone you when we learn anything," he said indifferently.

"You think — you can find him?"

The detective raised his palms. "That is hard to say."

"But you will do your best?"

"That goes without saying."

He smiled quizzically as he spoke. For the first time he noticed how attractive his client was. A vague regret flitted across his mind that if he disappeared there would be no one to seek him with such eagerness. He dismissed the thought quickly, however. One in his position had no time for such nonsense. Time was too valuable to be wasted in dreaming. The Woman faded: only the Case remained. He fell to drumming on the desk with his pencil, and Judith realised that he asked nothing further of her. She thanked him and rose. Silently he opened a private door leading to the hallway, bowed courteously as she passed him, and went back to his desk as if he had already forgotten her.

Judith went home at once, and all through the morning, she saw to it that she was not very far from the telephone. Every time it rang her heart pounded a little harder, and each time that the call was not what she hoped it would be, disappointment became a little more keen, the fear of failure a little more pronounced.

The maid who served luncheon reported to the kitchen that her mistress had tasted nothing.

"What did I tell ye?" said the cook with profound mysteriousness, and even the chauffeur's boy, who could not recall that she had told anything, was silenced. "There's things goin' on in this house," she declared impressively, when she observed that the silence about her was respectful, "as how none of ye understand." There was no denial.

At about three o'clock, Judith heard the first news.

"The postmark, of course, told us the general locality," said the placid voice over the telephone, speaking very slowly and distinctly. "I have just heard from one of my operatives who has been investigating the drug-stores in the neighbourhood, that he expects to locate a doctor at any time, who will be able to supply the rest of the information we seek. It may be an hour — perhaps two — perhaps not to-day. But I think I can assure you of ultimate success."

Judith thanked him so calmly that the detective wondered. Had he seen the expression of her face as she hung up the receiver, he would have wondered still more.

But as three o'clock merged into four, and four rolled away into five, with no further report, Judith's restlessness gave place to resignation. And when, just as it was turning dark, the maid announced Imrie, she was able to welcome him as unaffectedly as if not a care clouded her sky.

It was merely a reaction, of course, quite inevitable after the strain of anxiety and suspense under which she had laboured for days: but he was not aware of that. All he knew was that Judith was again the person he had known and loved so long ago. Back upon him rushed the passion which had been quiescent before her detached indifference. As she stood before him, her eyes sparkling, her teeth gleaming, in smiles the like of which he had not seen, it seemed, since they were children together, all the hopes and dreams, so long dormant, sprang to his lips.

"Ah, Judith, girl!" he cried, as he jumped to his feet and faced her. "It's got to come out again. I can't help it — I don't *want* to help it. I . . ."

A look of something akin to terror flashed into Judith's eyes. "Don't, Arnold — please — you mustn't . . ." She drew away, almost as if she

feared him. The movement, slight though it was, hurt him infinitely.

"I suppose it's foolish," he said wistfully. "You made that pretty clear once. But I can't help thinking that things are different now. I'm not better than I was then — but I know myself better. I was a prig — full of pride — conceited. At least I'm not that any more. I'm only . . ." Suddenly he stopped and eyed her narrowly.

"Tell me, Judith," he demanded, "is it because — there's someone else?"

He was not sure whether she had shaken her head or not. It had become very dark. He waited a moment, and when she said nothing, he moved a step nearer again. They were almost touching each other, and the faint fragrance of her hair in his nostrils, the soft roundness of her shoulders, overwhelmed him. He trembled violently, and his voice shook.

"Judith . . ." The words came low but strongly. "I've — I love you. Do you hear — I love you. I want you — can't you see it? I've loved you ever since I knew what the word meant. I love you more now than I ever did before. I've forced myself to wait, to hope, to be patient. I thought that perhaps . . . Judith, my dearest, I can't do that any longer. I can't trust myself near you any more. The strain of appearing calm and

contented when I'm here leaves me wretched afterward. I've tried hard to feel it as well as seem it. But it's no use. I can't. Even my work's no help. You're between me and it all the time. I hoped it would bring me nearer to you. But something — someone — it simply can't go on. I can't stand it. Either you marry me — or we've got to separate for good. I . . ."

"Arnold — what nonsense!" cried Judith. "Why . . ." As she lifted her eyes and felt his hot gaze upon her, she caught her breath and was silent. Neither spoke for what seemed hours, the only sound the ticking of the great clock in the hall. Then, with a suddenness that stunned, Imrie's strong arms were around her.

"I guess you need to be taken, my girl!" The words seemed driven through his teeth. "I've been too . . . polite. The last time I kissed you I was ashamed of myself. I think if I'd kissed you twice I'd have you now. But it's never too late . . ."

Imrie had a powerful frame. She was impotent to prevent the eager kisses he showered upon her.

"Too polite!" he ground from between set jaws. "Not enough — sheer *man* . . ."

And then, with the force of a blow, the gust of passion vanished, as he realised that she was not struggling. She lay in his arms, her eyes closed, as if she had swooned, but with the faintest of smiles

playing around her lips. He felt suddenly sheepish and awkward. He had seized her with the force of desperation, bent upon having his will with her, whether she would or no. He had half expected her to scream or scratch, to play the primal woman to his primal man. Yet here she was, lying quiet in his arms, as if — as if . . . she liked it! It was incredible. It was like stooping to pick up a great weight, only to find it tissue paper. He was thrown back upon himself, all weak and trembling and amazed and delighted . . . a complex of more emotions than he could possibly enumerate. But as he strove to articulate, to say something, however banal, he became aware that Judith's eyes had opened.

It was an absurd thought, he told himself, but she seemed to be listening — and not to him. Then he became conscious of a bell ringing somewhere in the house, and suddenly Judith sprang from him like an arrow from a bow.

He sat down helplessly. All his tired brain could formulate was a question without words. His arms seemed strangely weary . . . as if he had been carrying a dead weight.

In a very few minutes Judith reappeared.

"I've found it," she said, with an air of imparting information for which he had long been waiting. "I'm going over at once."

"You've found it?" he echoed stupidly. "You're going over? What? Where? I don't understand."

"Brent Good's," she said quietly, already pulling on her gloves. "He's ill."

"Oh." The words were enough to galvanise Imrie into action. He jumped to his feet, his jaw set. "I shall go with you," he said. It was not uttered as a threat, nor yet as an offer. Judith divined it for what it was — a statement of fact. But she tried to protest.

"It's not at all necessary."

"I shall go with you," he repeated, with an air of believing that no human power could possibly prevent it. And Judith, with a recollection of his recent amazing outburst of masterfulness, said no more.

He seized her hand when they were in the automobile, and she made no effort to withdraw it. But something told him that she was not even conscious that he held it. After a little, he released it. She had gone very far away from him again, he thought sadly, as he watched her staring wide-eyed out into the darkness. It seemed clear enough now where she had gone, but there was no less grief at the going, for the knowledge. The swing of Irmie's hope had reached its amplitude in those brief moments he had held her unresisting in his arms. It reached

its lowest ebb on that silent ride to the home of his rival.

He noticed, as he turned also to stare out of the window, that boulevards were giving place to meaner streets. Car-tracks were more in evidence, and people, particularly children, more numerous. From the increased jolting, the change in the character of the pavements was obvious. For a little while they rolled down a very brightly lighted thoroughfare, lined with shops and moving-picture theatres, and crowded with vehicles and humanity. Then they turned into a street which was hardly lighted at all, lined with tall, narrow buildings, entered through steep, high porches. A few minutes later the car stopped.

Imrie followed Judith up the precipitous ascent to one of the tall, narrow buildings. Vaguely unpleasant odours assailed him even before the front door was opened.

"I would like to see Mr. Good," said Judith to the round-shouldered slattern who answered the bell. The latter nodded dubiously for a moment, before she disappeared down the dark and narrow hall. Imrie noticed that she limped as she walked, and that her underskirt showed on one side. From somewhere below a nauseous odour of stale cooking drifted up. It was reminiscent to him of schoolday cabbage and boiled things. He watched Judith in

the huge mirror which hung to one side. It was cracked rather badly, and one of the corners of its finger-marked black frame had separated.

Presently a stout, red-faced woman with untidy hair, appeared from the passageway where the young girl had disappeared. She was using her apron to wipe alternately her hands and the perspiration which exuded copiously from her forehead. One of her eyes was slightly crossed, giving her a curious aspect, half comic, half malevolent.

"I would like to see Mr. Good, if I may," repeated Judith pleasantly, as she approached.

The stout woman raised her hand with a gesture of regret. "Pshaw now — you're too late."

"Too late?" echoed Judith, her voice trembling.

"Yiss, it's too bad, surely," said the woman calmly. "He died goin' on two days, it is."

For an instant Imrie thought that Judith was going to faint. All the colour left her face. As she stood there, trembling and swallowing hard, her pallor showing green in the dim and flickering gaslight, he thought he had never seen anything more pitiful.

"Was you a friend of his'n?" asked the stout woman, apparently rather surprised at the reception of her intelligence.

"Yes," whispered Judith, drawing the words in through compressed lips, "I was a — friend."

Then she removed her hand from the newel post, which had steadied her, and drew herself erect with what seemed like a physical effort.

"I wonder if it would be possible to . . . has his room — been changed? Could I . . . see it?"

"Bless yer heart, child, that ye may," said the landlady sympathetically, as if she had solved the problem. Imrie hated her violently for her solution. "Jist step this way," she added soothingly.

She led the way up interminable flights of stairs, which creaked and groaned no matter how lightly they tried to walk. Finally they stopped climbing, and proceeded down a narrow hall, lighted, after a fashion, by a single gas lamp. Every now and then a draft from somewhere set it quivering gustily.

Judith was walking as if in a dream. Imrie felt certain that she saw none of the sights which he saw, nor heard the sounds, nor smelled the odours. But he was wrong. She felt them all with ten times the keenness that he did.

At length their guide halted, breathing heavily, and after fumbling with a bunch of rusty keys, swung open a door which creaked dismally. A breath of air, faintly pungent with the odour of drugs, came from the room beyond.

Judith and Imrie stood silently waiting in the hall. The only sound was a muttered imprecation from the landlady as she stumbled into something in her

search for the light. When she found it, the jet was clogged, and it whistled and danced as if animate, piping a march to their entrance.

The room was incredibly small, one wall being reduced to less than the height of a man by the sharp slope of the roof: and there was only one window. It was a vivid moment, even to the stout woman, who did not understand it at all. To Imrie, who thought he understood it, but did not, the background of the play was burned into his memory never to be erased.

He was keenly cognisant of the places where the wood floor showed through the dingy carpet, and the black spots on the iron bedstead from which the paint had chipped off. He saw, too, the serrated edges of the water pitcher, and the discoloured marble top of the rickety wash basin. The poverty of the little room, intensified by its very neatness, struck him with a clarity which hurt.

But most of all, he noticed the books. They were everywhere, for the most part ancient in appearance, but with the subtle difference between the age of use and that merely of years. There was a set of shelves, with its flimsy boards bending under them. They were piled under the bed, in corners, on the mantel . . . he stopped when he reached the mantel, partly from Judith's half-uttered cry, partly from what he saw.

It was a photograph, in a cheap gilt frame, of Judith herself, apparently cut from some newspaper. It was the only picture in the room. Aside from the books, it was the only thing which did not belong to the boarding-house. Imrie felt a lump rise in his throat. He heard Judith's voice faintly.

She was asking matter-of-fact questions quite calmly, but the effort it was costing her was manifest. The landlady, who was superstitious, was very glad that the silence had been broken. She talked volubly.

"Yiss, he was buried all right and reg'lar. No, there was no fun'ral. He said as how 'twas needless expense. No, there was no friends, 'cept, o' course, a few of us here-abouts. He wouldn't 'ave nobody notified. He said as how nobody cared. I think m'self 'e wandered a bit. He talked wild, it seemed to me. No, 'e didn't suffer none — not as I could see. His books? Oh, 'e sold 'em. They're comin' for 'em to-morrer. He wanted the money given to a Jew boy that's sick downstairs. He was queer, Mr. Good was, but 'e was allus free with 'is money, that 'e was."

"What about the picture?" Judith's voice was strained and hoarse.

"Oh, that? He told me to send it to some lady. Funny name, it was. I got it downstairs. I been too busy to attend to it. What with the dyin' and

the buryin' an' all, not to mention the cookin'— and two parties moved out to-day, an' . . ."

"Was it Wynrod — the name?" asked Judith gently.

A light broke over the stout woman's face. "Sure now, that was it. But how did ye know?" Her eyes narrowed suspiciously.

"I am Miss Wynrod."

"Oh, so that's it, is it. Well then, ye can be takin' it an' save me the trouble. An' by the way — there's a letter, too. I fergot about that. One moment an' I'll have it fer ye . . ."

She disappeared noisily. Judith stood staring out of the window. Imrie tried to fix his attention upon the books, but his eyes kept wandering miserably to Judith's unresponsive back, drooping like a wilted flower. Neither spoke. The stout woman returned in a surprisingly short time, considering her bulk.

"Here 'tis," she cried cheerfully, puffing like some inadequate engine. "I spilt a little cranberry on it, but that won't hurt the inside." She handed the envelope to Judith and stood waiting expectantly.

But Judith turned and accepted it without a word, her grey face as immobile as if made of stone. Quietly she moved nearer the whistling gas-light, and after a pause, as though she were girding herself for a struggle, she tore the flap quickly.

It was a short note:

"Dearest of Friends:

"This is my 'thirty.' My story's done — the candle's out.

"But after all, each one of us is only a page — perhaps only a letter — in the great Book. We're blotted out or torn away, but the Story goes on — always.

"The forms are closed on my tale. The wires are dead. But there's 'more to follow' in *your* story. And the big Yarn isn't finished because my take's all set. Even when the Foreman puts the blue envelope in *your* box, even then — there will be 'more to follow.'

"I have loved you well."

Still moving like an automaton, she folded the scrap of paper and placed it carefully in her bag. Then, as if she could not speak, she bowed to the landlady, who surveyed her in patent disappointment, and walked slowly from the room. Imrie followed, understanding something of her suffering, impotent to help.

But once in the automobile, he could stand it no longer.

"Oh, Judith, Judith," he cried brokenly, "won't you let me . . ." He put his arm around her and drew her to him.

She freed herself mechanically.

"No, Arnold," she said very gently. "Not — not now . . ."

Then the tears came.

FINIS

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